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Kuncheria Pathil

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Indian Churches at the Crossroads

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Editorial

On the threshold of the Third Millennium the Indian Churches will naturally take stock of the present situation and look forward to the future. The Indian Churches are at the crossroads, and the future of Christianity in India depends on the path we choose today. In preparation for the present issue of *Jeevadhara* we asked a few friends to spell out important issues and questions facing the Churches in the present day India, and the result was a long list of concrete issues. Out of this list we selected some and invited a few resource persons to present them briefly, indicating the directions we have to take and the possible lines of action on the part of the Churches.

In the context of the ongoing dialogue among World Religions and of the emerging theology of religions, there has been some confusion with regard to the understanding and practice of evangelization today. Many Churches fear, as expressed in some of their recent statements, that their task of proclamation of Jesus Christ is substituted today by dialogue and liberation movements. John Peter from his own experience as Director of a dialogue Centre, clarifies the concept of evangelization and the relation between dialogue and proclamation. Proclamation and dialogue have reciprocity. Proclamation has to be done in a spirit of dialogue and dialogue must come out of our commitment to Jesus Christ.

Another phenomenon to be studied and reflected upon by the Indian Churches is the spread of the Charismatic movement and revival of fundamentalism. Paul Puthanangady, the former Director of the NBCLC, gives his assessment of the movement. Vatican II was a new Pentecost for the Catholic Church; the Charismatic movement in the Church may be considered as an outward expression of this outpouring of the Spirit during the post-Vatican period. But it apparently contains within itself the danger of separatism, exclusivism, fundamentalism, authoritarianism, exhibitionism and religious superficiality as well as a sort of magic. It requires serious discernment of the Spirit by the whole

Church. We should not let any religion today fall back into superstitions and magic.

There are 70,000 religious women in the Catholic Church in India today. What could be their specific role and contribution to the Church and society at large in the context of India's 406 million female population, majority of whom are reduced to a subhuman level. In answer to this question Margaret Shanti underlines the need of theological education for women religious in the Church. The Church is supposed to be a discipleship of equals, and women in the Church have to take the lead in liberating women, which requires theological education. Theology itself must be liberated from its male domination which has made it one-sided and distorted. While Margaret Shanti stresses the role of women religious and their need for theological formation, Chacko Valiaveetil speaks of the plight of women in general and their need for liberation. He shows the contrast between the treatment of women by Jesus in the Gospel of John and that in the tradition of the Church. Then he speaks of the condition of women in Indian religions and finally reflects on the importance of the rebirth and rediscovery of 'myth' for the survival of humankind.

From the ecumenical perspective there are several important challenges to the Catholic Church which, with more than 14 million membership, is the biggest and the most influential among the Churches in India today. With their ecumenical experience at the Ecumenical Christian Centre, Bangalore, Rosario Narchison and D. K. Kamal outline the ecumenical task of the Church in India. We have to move away from the western imperialistic Christendom model, and create indigenous ecclesial and theological models marked by rich pluralism. The Church has to relate itself to the other major religions in India and promote dialogue and co-operation in view of the liberation, humanization, peace and unity of the whole humankind. For this what we need today is theologically trained Christian workers who would function as catalysts in our villages and towns rather than priests and pastors whose function is often limited within the walls of the parish Churches.

The collapse of the socialist movement in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union has its negative impact on the radical movements in the Church especially in the Third World. A serious

study, discussion, and evaluation of those events must be made by the Church, and lessons have to be learned in choosing our paths forward. To interpret those events as a victory of Capitalism over Socialism will be a mistake. The Socialist vision is still widely accepted as our ideal, though its Communist expression took a distorted form as it became dictatorial and suppressed the democratic spirit. Reflecting on this issue K.C. Abraham of the United Theological College, Bangalore, underscores our task of developing indigenous models of socialism and that of the Church of being a prophetic and critical force in society.

The Catholic Church is a communion of many Individual Churches/Rites, each with its own identity and legitimate freedom. But unfortunately in India the existence of the three Rites - Syro-Malabar, Latin and Syro-Malankara - has been very often a source of unhealthy rivalries, power struggles and conflicts. The Rites themselves are not the problem; on the contrary, they manifest the rich variety and catholicity of the Church of Christ. The craving for domination over others, a wrong understanding of ecclesiology and an outdated concept of unity as uniformity are some of the root causes of the problem. Kuncheria Pathil introduces briefly this issue and invites the three Catholic Churches in India to deal with this problem in a mature way and with a broader theological and ecclesiological vision.

The priestly formation and seminary system today is not yet radically different from the Tridentine model we had inherited from the counter-Reformation period. Are priests trained today to become *poojaris* within the Churches, or to assume a more prophetic and pastoral role both in the Church and society? Dominic Veliath, Rector of the Salesian Seminary at Bangalore, discusses the issue of the "Crisis in Priestly Formation".

The issues presented in this Number are meant to be seminal and just starting points for further critical study and deeper theological reflection. We cannot be indifferent to the options we take, as the Churches in India are at the crossroads today.

The Impact of the Crisis of Socialism on Radical Movements in the Church

The collapse of socialist regimes in Eastern Europe and Soviet Union raises new challenges and questions to all who are committed to a radical renewal of society everywhere. The so-called leftist groups in politics and in the church who have imbibed Marxian insight for their ideology are now compelled to take a new look at their strategies. While their commitment to change is unabated so long as large sections of humanity continue to be under the grip of oppressive and dehumanising structures, they are aware that they need to learn valuable lessons from the failure of the present model of socialist experiment. They are engaged in a serious reflection on the future of socialism and try to integrate new elements in their analysis.

It is difficult to give a coherent and adequate account of the responses to radical groups in the churches to the socialist crisis. One can only identify some trends, especially basing on the articulation of a few people who continue to struggle with the poor.

1. Historical perspectives

No crisis is entirely new. There are historical developments that lead to it. People who know the history of socialist regimes are well aware of the many contradictions in them. They know too well about the gross violation of human rights, the curtailment of the freedom of speech and the right to dissent and all other forms of dictatorial rule of the party in Soviet Union. Brutal regime of Stalin has moved further away from the Socialist vision of Marx. Stalinism was a reign of terror in which masses were treated as mere producers of wheat, steel, coal and other basic necessities. The successive regimes continued to rule by force suppressing any attempt by people for critical and independent thinking.

Radical groups within the church who have been attracted to marxism often raised their voices against such gross violation and distortion of socialist vision by Soviet Union. Soviet regime's determination to thwart any independent initiative by countries within the communist world was clear when Soviet forces occupied Czechoslovakia. And at that time several members of Christian Peace Conference — a radical forum created by the inspiration of the famous Czech theologian Hromedka for dialogue between theologians from the communist and non-communist countries — left the movement which was reluctant to condemn the aggression by Soviet Union. From this and many other instances it is clear that the radical groups within the churches never uncritically affirmed Soviet expressions of communism. They were critical of the many failures of the historical expression of Socialism — especially the non-democratic forms of government, the imposition of the party and the denial of people's participation and their ethnic and cultural identity.

Many social activists have been engaged in a search for authentic forms of socialism that is germane to their own cultural traditions. A Buddhist monk in the Southern Province in Sri Lanka, a political activist with a marxist framework, responded to the socialist crisis in a way typical of other activists. He said the present crisis should be seen as a good opportunity for the social activists to deepen their search for an indigenous model of socialism. Far too long, he observed, the communists were satisfied by imitating Soviet Union.

However, all students of communist development are also aware of the achievements of socialist regimes, as, for example, advances in economic equality, the elimination of absolute poverty, steps towards health and education for all and the development in sciences and sports. One would hope these gains will be preserved in the changing circumstances. Whatever new model we evolve, these basic necessities of people should be met.

2. Not a triumph of capitalism

All the radical groups agree that it is too facile to interpret the crisis as a victory of capitalism. In fact, the people who are responsible for the present changes in Soviet Union are not

necessarily capitalist forces, although attempts have been made to destabilise the socialist economy by them.

Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) meeting in Nairobi were unequivocal about the present situation when they said:

The historical expressions of socialism have failed in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. But we do not accept international capitalism, dominated by the TNCs and the main capitalist countries, as an acceptable social order for the future. Unbridled capitalism, with its emphasis on technology and productivity, offers no acceptable future for the masses of the poor and for nature, and it provides an atmosphere for the growth of insidious racism.

The anti-poor stance of the capitalist model of growth is well known. In the long run capitalist mode of growth destroys the very fabric of our society. The ecological crisis has dramatically brought to our consciousness the futility of this model. It is suicidal. Therefore, in the long run, it is futile to look for an alternative to the Soviet expression of Socialism in capitalism. Kappen has expressed this strongly:

The search must be for alternative to capitalism which means the struggle against capitalism must continue to be on the agenda of all activist groups, and must be carried on at the local, national and international levels (*The Future of Socialism and Socialism of the Future*) (Vsthar, 1992, p. 32).

Today, capitalism has changed in style and operation. We should not be facile and superficial in our analysis. Information technology, for example, has broken the monopoly of power by the elite. It is more 'democratised'. The old way of approaching capitalism should change. What is important, however, is that the value system that nurtures capitalist system remains unchanged. One may have to direct one's attention to it. As S. Kappen pointed out, capitalism has a culture. People internalise the values of capitalism. Soviet Communism has not been sensitive to this dimension of capitalism with the result that when a crisis broke out, it was easy for people to make a transition to capitalism.

Seen in this perspective, the action groups have a task that is both difficult and necessary.

3. A commitment to socialist vision

Whatever be the failure of the historical expression of socialism in Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, all the action groups are convinced that the socialist vision and values should necessarily be affirmed. One could debate over the concrete expression and strategy for change. But the socialist vision represents the human values which for christian groups are the kingdom values. Therefore, the marxist humanism that guided the socialist system is still relevant.

M.M. Thomas, in an analysis on the break-up of socialism has given expression to this very forcefully:

I have no regrets that Stalinist communism with its one-party political totalitarianism and a command economy which destroyed all economic initiative from the bottom distintegrated by its own inner contradictions. No doubt, it had its roots in the idea of one-party proletarian dictatorship of Leninism and the vagueness of Marx's own idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Elsewhere I have made the point that the roots of the inhumanity of Stalinism can be traced by the Enlightenment Humanism which Marx shared with most of the 19th century secular democratic intellectuals, in which the transcendent spiritual dimension of the human person was denied paving the way to dissolving the transcendent ground of human dignity in an ensemble of social functions and relations. Even so, we need not deny the validity of Marx's humanism with its interpretations of the social sources of self-alienation of human beings in a class society. And in any case, Marx had predicted that no social system which became a fetter on production could survive in history; and Stalinism fell as it had become such a fetter. Of course, the point I am making is that the distintegration of Stalinist Communism cannot be the end of Socialism. If an alternative to world capitalism is needed to promote social justice, a new form of socialism has to emerge in the Third World which now, of course, may be defined to include Eastern Europe as well.

4. Some missing links

Having said about the positive gains and continued relevance of the socialist vision, we need to look at the lessons

action groups are compelled to make more seriously in order that their analysis may be holistic and their strategy wholesome.

a) It is now obvious that religion, ethnic loyalty and other identities should be taken seriously in any programme for the peoples' development. Marx's view of religion was dictated by the enlightenment tradition of his day. There was a facile assumption that religion will disappear with economic development. This has proved wrong.

Marx has helped us to see the distortions and oppressive elements in institutional religion. But he failed to recognise the liberative core within religions. The struggle of the marginalised everywhere has to draw from this spiritual core. It sustains them in and gives them a sense of security. History has proved right with regard to this. We may be able to suppress such primordial loyalties with iron fists. But the bottled up feelings will erupt as it happens in some of the countries of Eastern Europe.

Spirituality of the poor is the theme that has assumed a special place in all radical groups. They are aware of the dynamic elements in a commitment to transcendence. They try to drink from their own wells. The black native Americans and indigenous and tribal people are consciously developing a spirituality that is holistic and life affirming. Christian faith should identify it and respond to it.

b) Ecological crisis has brought to our awareness another missing link in the marxian framework. Technological and industrial growth was assumed to be the means for development. This kind of unbridled growth has resulted in wanton destruction of nature. In the use of technology capitalism and communism follow the same path. It was to the credit of Gandhi that he raised a critical voice to it. Alas, we have not learnt from him. But the present crisis in ecology has forced us to re-think this model. A sustainable form of development is to be evolved.

The earth summit has brought to our awareness different dimensions of this crisis and made a passionate plea for an alternative form of development. But the earth summit has also demonstrated how difficult it is for the affluent to change their life-style, without which an alternative form of development is impossible.

c) Community of Communities. Finally, the crisis of socialism and ethnic conflicts raise a fundamental issue: What kind of men and women are we seeking? It is obvious that the identity of a community is important to any struggle for social justice. But identity cannot be absolutized. How do we create one community where different communities could live together without fear of domination?

It is this vision of community that is being celebrated by the Church. How true is its life to this vision? The present crisis and the action groups' response issue this challenge to us.

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Tension between Dialogue and Proclamation

These reflections are made in the context of a concrete experiment of working together with members of various religions in Divyodaya Inter-religious Centre, Coimbatore to promote understanding among people. The centre was founded in 1980 drawing inspiration from the Vatican teaching on dialogue with members of other religions. An effort which during the first few years was viewed by the members of the majority community with suspicion and apprehension has been later on blessed with active and enthusiastic involvement of members from various religions. The motto of Divyodaya was chosen from this experience: "The bonds that unite us are stronger than the barriers that separate us".

Last May a month-long summer camp was conducted here for the age group of 14 to 16 aiming at the all-round personal growth of the participants. Nearly two thirds of the 57 students were from Hindu background. In a written evaluation made at the end of the camp the students were asked, "What was your first impression when you stepped in?", and "What is your impression at the end of the camp about Divyodaya?" To the first question they said: "I was afraid because it is a Christian institution", "I was afraid that I will be converted", "I was afraid because it is an inter-religious centre run by Christians" and so on. To the second: "It is a place where men are made divine", "It is a family from which we should never be separated".

Why is there a feeling of fear and anxiety in members of other religions when they approach centres of Good News of Jesus Christ, as all our institutions are expected to be; why such a deep fear of conversion? We have to diagnose this symptom of fear, and examine our own ways of presenting the Good News.

It is well known that the sociological aspect of conversion,

is repugnant to Hindus, especially the caste Hindus. The fear of conversion is ultimately rooted in the threat of being uprooted from one's own cultural ethos. The Catholic Bishops of the United States in their Pastoral Letter on the occasion of the Columbus Quincentenary acknowledged the mistake made when Christianity was brought to the native Indians. "In this quincentennial year, we extend our apology to the native peoples and pledge ourselves to work with them to ensure their rights, their religious freedom and the preservation of their cultural heritage."¹ Christian mission in Asia faced comparatively strong opposition from proud and self-confident indigenous religious cultures. The very small size of the Church on the subcontinent and its concentration among the poor and illiterate are the result of this cultural resistance. The experience of our past mission, the present developments in the country at the political, religious, social and other levels and the renewed self-awareness of the Church in and after Vatican II influenced the Church in India? The answer to this question will be beneficial to the Church in her present mission.

By accepting dialogue and inculturation as essential elements of the missionary approach the Church at the highest level has shown an amount of sensitivity to the root cause of fear of conversion and the cultural shock involved. Recognition of the work of the Spirit in cultures and religions of mankind is the basis of dialogue. "Through dialogue, the Church seeks to uncover the 'seeds of the word', a 'ray of Truth which enlightens all men'. These are found in individuals and in the religious traditions of mankind... Each member of the faithful and all Christian communities are called to practise dialogue, although not always to the same degree or in the same way."²

Inculturation brings about a reciprocal fecundation for the given culture and the Gospel. "Through inculturation the Church makes the Gospel incarnate in different cultures and at the same time introduces peoples, together with their cultures, into her community. The Church becomes a more intelligible sign of what she is."³

The accusation of the militant Hindu groups about Muslims and Christians is well known, namely, that they lack loyalty to the

1 Quoted by Paul Gasperz in *Vidyajyoti*, May 1992, p. 245

2 *Redemptor Hominis*, 56-57

3. *Redemptoris Missio* (RM) 52

country, that they were not sufficiently involved in the nationalist movement, that after Independence they are not fully integrated in the national mainstream and so on. The spirit of dialogue demands that we give a patient listening to them and examine the life of the Church and her attitude to others. It is good to know what the R.S.S. for example understands by involvement in the national mainstream. "Identification with the national mainstream of our country means: unalloyed devotion to the motherland, a spirit of fraternity and identification of one's interests with all the rest of the countrymen and an attitude of adoration towards the great nation builders, and the values of life bequeathed to us by them."⁴

As regards missionaries who are sent to a cultural milieu different from their own, inculturation demands familiarity with the language, culture and manner of living so that they be one with the people and are capable of understanding them. They should also see that the Christian communities they build up should not be strange sociological bodies in the midst of the people. "That they may be able to give this witness to Christ fruitfully, let them be joined to those men by esteem and love, and acknowledge themselves to be members of the group among whom they live. Let them share in cultural and social life by the various exchanges and enterprises of human living. Let them be familiar with their national and religious traditions, gladly and reverently laying bare the seeds of the word which lie hidden in them."⁵

Like the American Bishops apologizing for the mistake done to the natives, some enlightened Christian circles in India have started accepting the mistakes of missionary methods in the past, which had their share in the growth of communalism in the country. "We must make an honest self-examination on how far we have directly or indirectly contributed to communalism... At the period of Christian missionary expansion as a whole, the other religions were condemned and rejected as false, man-made, superstitious or even as devil's work."⁶

4 Seshadiri, H.V., *R. S. S. A Vision in Action*, Bangalore 1988, p. 11

5 A. G. 11

6 "Statement of the Eleventh Annual Meeting of the Indian Theological Association", in *Communalism in India*, Edited by S. Arulswamy, Bangalore 1988, p. 8

However genuine they might be, such apologies passed in theological meetings or included in the Church documents will do no good unless the new awareness passes on to the actual life of the Church and its relationship with members of other communities.

Besides the Vatican Document *Nostra Aetate* and the Encyclicals of Pope Paul VI *Evangelii Nuntiandi* and of Pope John Paul *Redemptoris Missio*, which chart out the teaching on dialogue in the context of the mission of the Church the Secretariat for Non-Christians (Pontifical Council) has published two important documents, namely, "The attitude of the Church towards the Followers of other Religions: Reflections and Orientations on Dialogue and Mission", 1984 (DM) and "Dialogue and Proclamation: Reflections and Orientations on Inter religious Dialogue and the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ", 1991 (DP) – the latter jointly by the Congregation of Evangelization. At the national level the CBCI Commission for Dialogue and Ecumenism has published "Guidelines for Dialogue", 1989.

In spite of all these developments in the thinking of the Church much has not changed at the local level. The growth of communalism is unprecedented in the history of the country. It is in this context that the importance given to dialogue and proclamation in the latest Church documents has to be assessed as well as their implications.

Evangelization has been usually understood as proclaiming Christ to those who do not know Him. But the recent documents underline the complex nature of the Church's evangelical activity, as "a single but complex and articulated reality"⁷, comprising several dimensions which are different forms of the mission of the Church. "Any partial and fragmentary definition which attempts to render the reality of evangelization in all its richness, complexity and dynamism does so only at the risk of impoverishing it and even distorting it. It is impossible to grasp the concept of evangelization unless one tries to keep in view all its essential elements."⁸ While emphasizing the centrality of the dimension of proclamation these documents make it clear that proclamation is only one aspect or dimension of the mission of the Church. "This proclamation – kerygma, preaching or catechesis – occupies

such an important place in evangelization that it has often been synonymous with it, and yet it is only one aspect of evangelization."⁹

Evangelization in the broad sense will include everything that the Church does for the renewal of the individuals, communities and cultures through the power of the Gospel. That is why Vatican II in its decree on the missionary activity of the Church mentions solidarity with mankind, dialogue and collaboration, before speaking about witness and preaching of the Gospel¹⁰.

The Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* takes out in a special way the dimension of witness in the option for the poor and the oppressed. "The evangelical witness which the world finds most appealing is that of concern for people... A commitment to peace justice, human rights and human promotion is also a witness to the Gospel."¹¹ Thus the broader understanding of the mission of the Church may be called evangelization and in its narrow sense as proclamation. Though every local Church and every Christian is called to carry out to some degree the whole mission of the Church, primacy given to this or that dimension in practice will depend upon various factors like circumstances, personal charism and so on¹².

Similarly dialogue is also understood in the broad sense as the spirit which should form a constitutive element of any form of mission and in the strict sense as a specific form of the mission. In the first sense "it intends to encourage behaviour formed by the Gospel in its encounter with the believers of other faiths"¹³. It moves us to recognize "the saving love of God which has been revealed and communicated in Christ and is present and active through the world by means of the Holy Spirit"¹⁴. This recognition of the action of God beyond all boundaries stems from the theological assessment of the cultures and religions of mankind as enshrining "seeds of the Word" (AG 11), "ray of that Truth which enlightens all" (NA 2). Thus dialogue as a dimension of any form of Christian mission consists not only in the full respect due for human freedom demanding rejection of any form of coercion whatsoever (cf. DM 18), but also respect and appreciation

9 EN 22

11 RM 42

13 DM 6

10. Cf. AG 11 – 13

12. DM 14

14. DM 9

for the values in the cultures and religious traditions of mankind. Dialogue proper as a distinct form of the mission of the Church, though it "remains oriented towards proclamation"¹⁵, has its own characteristics.

The description of dialogue given in the constitution *Regimini Ecclesiae* by Paul VI while establishing the Secretariat for Non-Christian Religions indicates the basic orientation of this mission of the Church. The purpose of dialogue as a distinct form of witness is "that Non-Christians come to be known honestly and esteemed justly by Christians, and that in their turn Non-Christians can adequately know and esteem Christian doctrine and life"¹⁶. Dialogue as different from simply the spirit of dialogue will mean then "all positive and constructive inter-religious relations with individuals and communities of other faiths which are directed at mutual understanding and enrichment"¹⁷. The dimension of mutuality and reciprocity is the characteristic note of this activity. "Mutual affirmation, reciprocal correction and fraternal exchange lead the partners in dialogue to an even greater maturity which in turn generates interpersonal communion."¹⁸

Something special to the latest Church Documents related to dialogue and proclamation is that they stress the importance of both and warn against confusing them and interchanging them. Aware of the present day missionary situation the Pope says, "I am well aware that many missionaries and Christian communities find in the difficult and often misunderstood path of dialogue their only way of bearing sincere witness to Christ"¹⁹. The words of the Pope may seem to project dialogue as a tactical measure, but the Pope who had given in the same Encyclical (No. 56) the theological foundation for dialogue is suggesting to the missionaries what is practical in the given circumstances. As sometimes branded by critics of the Church, dialogue and inculturation are not tactical measures, but arise from a renewed understanding of the mystery of Christ and the Church and of the action of God in the world. "The Church's commitment to dialogue remains firm and irreversible. All local Churches and all the members of these Churches, are called to dialogue, though not all in the same way."²⁰

15 DP 82.

16. AAS 59, 1967. Cf. DM 4.

17. DM 3

18 DM 21.

19. RM 57.

20. DP 54

While stressing the importance of dialogue these documents emphasize in the same vein the centrality of proclamation as its climax and fullness. Because of the overriding importance of proclamation dialogue is also seen as oriented to it. This is a delicate point which, when not understood properly, can lead to tension and conflict between the two.

The spiritual sensitivity to the immanence of the divine in the whole creation and faith in manifold incarnations make it easy for the Hindus to venerate and worship Christ as divine. By that very fact faith in the uniqueness of Christ, as we Christians conceive it, is most difficult for them to accept. If we reduce the object of mission to acceptance by Non-Christians of the uniqueness of Christ, it will remain the greatest stumbling block to evangelization.

Similarly conversion to another religion is considered a break with the cultural unity and is almost a sin for them. The fear of conversion in the minds of Hindus when they come to our missions is born from this threat of being separated from this unity which gives them meaning and safety.

As we have already seen the guidelines given by the Church regarding dialogue and inculturation shows that the Church has become sensitive to the Hindu sensibility. If the local churches and individual Christians, especially the community leaders²¹, understand the significance of this teaching and are ready to modify their attitude and behaviour in relation to other religions, it will certainly make it very easy for non-Christians to open up to the message of Christ. An appropriate response to the guidelines will be our willingness to draw up an action plan to educate the faithful at various levels²².

The DP document states that proclamation is a sacred and major duty of the Church and that "without this central element the others, though in themselves genuine forms of the Church's mission, would lose their cohesion and vitality"²³. The concern

21 The document DP is addressed particularly to all who have a leadership role in the community or are engaged in formation work. Cf. DP 7

22 Cf. John Peter, "Education for Dialogue", in *Indian Missiological Review*, July 91, pp. 33-47. "Evangelization and Dialogue", *Vidyajyoti*, Aug. 90, pp. 401 - 411

23 DP 76

of the Church is to remove the danger of replacing the evangelizing mission with dialogue or social action. Therefore as a theological guideline the stress on proclamation is in place. But when we consider the ground reality of the life of the Church, the stress on proclamation, unless matched with the education of the faithful to understand dialogue will create more problems and confusion. The call to humankind for commitment in its various forms which is called "an essential element of the mission of the Church and indissolubly connected with it"²⁴ is to be responded with utmost urgency in order to become an effective witness today.

A church which has no courage or vitality to attend to the signs of the times and the demands therefrom because of her preoccupation with her own internal problems and conflicts will easily stress the dimension of proclamation. This is a language easily understood and easy to practise as a verbal exercise. The inner contradictions are mainly the rivalries in the Kerala Church in the name of liturgical reform and the caste conflicts in the case of the Church in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh.

In addition to the above situation in the local churches which make them opt for proclamation to the neglect of other demands of the mission, we have to consider the fall-out of the Pentecostal influence in these churches through the charismatic movement. The Catholic Charismatic Movement has brought about an unprecedented vitality in these churches. While acknowledging the benefits of this spiritual renewal movement we should also take into account the simultaneous growth of Christian fundamentalism. The Pentecostal revival brings with it a narrow interpretation of the biblical teaching on mission, "narrow in its understanding of God's election and strong in its advocacy of verbal proclamation of the Gospel and a disregard of the particular context, over against other forms of missionary activity."²⁵

This trend is strengthened by the millennarian notions about the Year 2000. Basing themselves on Mt. 24:14 calling for the proclamation of the Gospel to the whole world, the most extreme Evangelicals marshal missionary resources in such a way as to bring the Gospel to all ethnic groups before the year 2000²⁶.

24 RH 15

25 James Knight, "Mission and Dialogue in Asia", *Vidya jyoti*, March 92, p. 133

26 Cf. *Ibid*

On the occasion of the World Peace Day of Prayer in Assisi in October 1986 Pope John Paul underlined the fundamental unity of the human race, in its origin and its destiny, and the role of the Church as an effective sign of this unity (DP 5). But how does the Church fulfil her role as the "sacrament of union with God and of the unity of all mankind"?²⁷ In the context of the simultaneous stress on dialogue and proclamation (DP 89) we know that the Church is called to bring the power of the Gospel to individuals and communities through a variety of services as required by the situation. At the same time we are reminded that proclamation which is "the foundation, centre and summit of evangelization" (DP 10) is ultimately "an invitation to a commitment of faith in Jesus Christ and to entry through baptism into the community of believers which is the Church"²⁸.

We know that because of the sociological and cultural factors involved in change of religion on the one hand and the prevailing religious and political constraints for conversion on the other, we cannot expect any substantial increase in the number of visible conversions. We have to pay more attention to other forms of evangelization in order to fulfil the mission entrusted to the Church. Especially in the context of communalism and exploitation of the poor how can the Church be a sign of unity and leaven in the heart of the society is a question which requires a lot of discernment and courage of faith.

While accepting the centrality of proclamation and the demand to witness to Christ whatever be the form of evangelization, we should recognize the various degrees of levels of conversion to which Christians as well as their non-Christian partners are called: greater sensitivity to the spiritual values, deepening of religious commitment, greater courage to rise beyond their personal or group selfishness and readiness to commit themselves for others beyond the barriers that divide the society today.

A valuable feature of the DP document is that it affirms the relationship between the Kingdom and other religions. Far from indentifying the Kingdom with the Church the document only says that the Church is the seed and the beginning of the Kingdom. At the same time it concedes that "the inchoate reality of the Kingdom can be found also beyond the confines of the Church"²⁹.

27 LG 1.

28. DP 10.

29. DP 35

Thus the mission of the Church is to foster the Kingdom of God which was inaugurated in the world by Christ. It becomes the bounden duty of the Church to recognize the inchoate reality of that Kingdom outside her own confines and join hands with others through dialogue and collaboration to further her mission³⁰.

Therefore we should recognize a reciprocal relationship between dialogue and proclamation: proclamation of the revelation of God's love in Christ has to be carried out in a spirit of dialogue and dialogue should flow from the recognition of the action of the Spirit everywhere and from one's commitment to Christ and from a desire to make him known and loved (DP 77).

Thus we can recognize a healthy and creative tension between dialogue and proclamation. If proclamation has its theological primacy in the evangelical mission of the Church, dialogue has its practical urgency because of the given situation. As long as the Church plays her servant role, the tension will remain salutary.

Divyodaya,
Coimbatore

John Peter

30 A. Pushparajan, "Wither Inter-religious Dialogue?", *Vidya jyoti*, April 92, p. 229

The Church and the Churches: the Ecumenical Task in India Today

In the period immediately preceding the Second Vatican Council, those Roman Catholics who were inclined to accept the non-catholic churches as churches tended to use the expression – “the Church and the churches”. This expression received indirect approval from the same Council when it declared the ecclesiality of the lesser churches while, of course, upholding the Roman Catholic body as ‘the Church’¹.

This contrast between the greater and the lesser among the churches seems to apply aptly to the Indian christian scene at several levels. In this paper we first list a few such levels of contrast between the churches, then we go on to point out the dominant model under which all the churches are operating, and in the next two parts we concentrate on the nature of the ecumenical task before us and the kind of leadership the Roman Catholic Church is called upon to provide.

I. Levels of Contrast

The contrast between the Catholic and the other churches in India is evident to any observer:

1. Numerically, the Catholic Church is the largest of all churches in India. If the Christians constitute 2.7% of the total population, Catholics alone make up 1.7%. It means that about 14.5 million Indians, equivalent to the total population of Australia, constitute a *single and structurally well integrated* Catholic Church in the land. This fact stands out in contrast to the other churches that

1 Cf. *The Decree on Ecumenism* Articles 3, 4, 14–18, 22 (lack of sacrament of orders in the ‘ecclesial communities separated from us’); *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, Article 8 with its ‘subsists’ statement which continues to evoke controversy.

are denomination-wise miserably fragmented and numerically marginalised.

2. The Catholic Church is recognized by one and all in the country – media, intelligentsia, secular agencies and the Government – as the most representative Christian body in India. One could, for a negative example, see this clearly in the portrayal of Christian characters in Indian films – the villains invariably perform Catholic religious practices such as making the sign of the Cross, praying to Mary, and the like. Despite the still persisting notion among certain sections of the lesser churches that the Catholic Church embodies an idolatrous and corrupt form of the Christian religion, nowadays these churches by and large are conceding to it a representative position for several reasons mentioned further below. Conversely, for the same reasons the Catholics seem to behave as if they are the only Christian body in India, as can be seen from the scant (almost nil) attention paid to the other churches at the 1989 National Convention of Catholics at Bombay².

3. Historically, the Catholic Church in India holds a primary place because of its ancient origins, predating the Protestant churches.

4. In terms of religious and social institutions, personnel, educational and medical missions, and the like, the Catholic Church occupies a pre-eminent position among the churches in India:

as of 1984, the Catholic Church had about 13,000 priests, 54,000 women religious, over 6,000 primary schools, 3,000 secondary schools, 190 colleges for liberal arts, 61 professional training colleges, 48 technical institutes; in the medical field about 615 hospitals, 1,550 dispensaries, 220 leprosaria, 309 homes for the aged and handicapped and 1,233 orphanages; to top it all India has the second largest number of Jesuits in the world³.

Similar institutions run by the non-catholic churches, on the other hand, do not seem to match the Catholic ones in number, size, influence and efficiency of management.

2 *Report of the National Convention of Catholics — 2nd to 5th June 1989*, Bombay: Archbishop's House, 1989.

3 Sources: *Report of the National Convention* (see no. 2 above); Julian Saldanha, "The Third Church is at Hand", *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection*, Vol. 54, No. 6 (June 1990), pp. 295–299.

5. Since Vatican II the Catholic Church in India has emerged as a pioneer in several fields of Christian renewal such as inculturation, biblical exploration, liturgical reform, and specially social activism. The Indian Social Institute and the National Biblical Catechetical and Liturgical Centre at Bangalore, both Catholic Institutions, are at the forefront of social and liturgical revolutions respectively. Further, there is nothing in the non-Catholic churches in India to match the Missionaries of Charity headed by Nobel Laureate Mother Teresa; of the fast growing number of biblical scholars and theologians being turned out by Indian seminaries, the majority are Catholics.

6. The Indian churches in general are the churches of the poor, a large percentage of them being dalits. Even here, the Catholic Church has less of these unfortunate people, as compared to the Protestant churches. The socio-economic clout of the Catholics, particularly in Kerala, is reflected in the number of Catholic political leaders including several ministers at the Central and State levels.

In brief, the Roman Catholic Church in India quantitatively does stand out as 'the Church' in relation to the other churches. The question before us is: does this fact call for a corresponding responsibility on the part of the Catholic Church? If, in the words of Jesus, "whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant..." (Matt 20:26), what should be the nature of the relationship between the Church and the churches?

We are not so much concerned here with the past history of ecclesial relationships (which sadly have not been cordial at all) as with the present and the future. All the reflections in this paper emanate mostly from the *personal experiences* of the two writers, who are privileged to be working in an institution where Christians of all churches and denominations criss-cross and come together throughout the year⁴. Hence less reference to printed books and articles in this paper than to personal experiences. These reflections, especially those in part III below, are tentative in articulation and seminal in intent; they do stand subject to constructive criticism.

4 The Ecumenical Christian Centre, Whitefield, Bangalore (herein-after referred to as ECC),

II. The Christendom Model Persists?

An important feature that engages our immediate attention as we look at the relationship between the churches in India may be called a 'radical' one because it goes to the very *radix* (root) of their origins. Despite all the recent official enthusiasm shown in the Catholic and other churches for an authentically indigenous form of Christianity, we see it as a fact that almost all Christian participants at our ECC programmes seem to be unable to get out of the 'Christendom' model of Christian living. By that we mean that they still tend to identify – wittingly or unwittingly – their Christian living with the imperial-feudal structures and faith-worship expressions which they inherited from the type of Christianity that was introduced to them.

The members of the 'Eastern Churches', especially the pastors and bishops, both within the ambit of and outside the Catholic Church still seem to be emotionally attached to the old East-Persian model, often lending support, at least indirectly, to the fragmentation of Christian communities all over the country on the basis of certain foreign "rites" inherited from the past. Even highly motivated adherents of these churches who attend the ECC programmes do not realise this and continue to have romantic illusions about the necessity of these "rites" which are in reality nothing more than relics of a bygone era.

As for other Catholics, large numbers of whom participate in the ECC programmes⁵, they still seem to be kept tied to the apron-strings of the West in terms of the selection of their leadership, inter-action with people of other faiths and ideologies, theological and spiritual formation of their ministers, and promotion of an elitist theology which finds it hard to accommodate the dalits and other oppressed sections within their Church. Further, the operation of the imperialistic Christendom model within the Catholic Church in India is evident from the fact that a large segment of ministerial personnel are being exported from South India to the North and North-East. This creates an ominous situation where

5 The ECC has several Programmes, one of which is the Indian School of Ecumenical Theology (ISET) inaugurated in November 1988. Of the total of 382 participants of the ISET courses, 120 have been Roman Catholics, the largest number from any single Church.

local, particularly lay leadership is ignored, and this may prove to be a serious problem in the near future. Rumbings in this regard are being heard by us from Catholic as well as Baptist and Presbyterian participants from North-East India. Thus we see that an indigenous form of Christian imperialism is being blessed and promoted by certain sections of the Catholic Church in India.

Interestingly enough, while the Catholic Church is extending its imperialistic reach from the South to the North and North-East, formidable dents are being made in its ranks in the South, resulting in a large-scale exodus of Catholics into various Pentecostal churches. The Catholic participants at our programmes, especially those from the fishermen communities in the South, express alarm and dismay over this fact.

In the case of Protestant churches — both the mainline and the free ones — it was the Christendom model which undeniably underlay the Unionism of the pre- and immediately post-Independence days. The two major Unions (CSI and CNI) have failed to bring about anything authentically indigenous in Christian living. On the contrary, another form of imperialistic christianity has been subtly eroding the ranks of these and other Protestant churches, resulting in the mushrooming of several Pentecostal churches which themselves are largely the products of modern neo-colonialist expansion from the West. This development needs to be studied further⁶.

Two other important aspects of this imperial-Christendom model call for our attention. One is the continued dependence of almost all Christian churches and organisations on financial assistance from the West; the second is what George Soares-Prabhu calls the

conflict between the 'head' of christianity and its 'heart', between the intolerant truth it professes and the unrestrained love⁷,

6 Cf. Lionel Caplan, *Religion and Power: Essays on the Christian Community in Madras*, Madras: CLS, 1989; *Class and Culture in Urban India: Fundamentalism in a Christian Community*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987; Franklyn J. Balasundaram, "The Voice and the Voices or The History and the Development of the Charismatic Movement: A Theological Critique", *Asia Journal of Theology*, Vol. IV, No. 1 (April 1990), pp. 225-252.

7 Cf. S. Arokiasamy (ed.), *Responding to Communalism: The Task of Religions and Theology*, Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1991, p. 145

which it pours out through its medical, educational and charitable institutions. This 'head-wise' intolerance breeds communalism in an insidiously subtle way, and seems to be endemic to the profession of Christian religion in India.

III. The Radical Face of Dialogue

The 1968 WCC Assembly at Uppsala rightly remarks that the world sets the agenda for the church. India therefore sets the agenda for the Indian churches. The first fact about the present Indian situation is that the dream of the leaders of the National Independence Struggle for a united India is being dashed to the ground. More and more fissiparous and secessionist tendencies and activities are eating into the very unity and integrity of our nation. In view of this, what is the common Ecumenical task of the churches in India?

The ecumenical task cannot merely be the unification of the churches for two reasons. First, as a matter of historical fact, the few church unions that were achieved have proved to be ineffective instruments of unification of human societies. In the case of the CSI, as its significant spokesman Samuel Amirtham has observed, "the powers that divide the society are equally strong in the Church [CSI]". He further notes,

the quality of the inner life of the Church has not visibly changed since union, or because of union...unity of churches is no guarantee for community of persons ... joint endeavours for mission have become additional factors for fights and rivalries ... the Church finds itself unable to be delivered from those problems that plague the society at large⁸.

That the task of building up a community of love and of mutual caring, sharing and suffering is not facilitated by the visible 'union' of the churches is brought out forcefully in the many workshops that we conduct at the ECC, especially for pastors.

The second reason is more theological. The word *ecumenical*, etymologically pointing to the whole inhabited world, is being understood today in terms of four concentric circles: 1) Unity of Churches; 2) Unity of people of all faiths and ideologies; 3) Unity of humankind; 4) Unity and Integrity of Creation. At

8 Mathai Zachariah, *Ecumenism in India. Essays in Honour of Rev. M. A. Thomas*, Delhi: ISPCK, 1980. p. 86

the present stage, impelled by our experiences at the ECC, we feel that the ecumenical task the Church should promote in collaboration with the churches is unity of people of divergent faiths and ideologies in India. Only then can we go on to contribute to the unity of humankind and the integrity of the entire created order. In other words, inter-faith dialogue, understood as explained below, appears to us to be the primary ecumenical task, for which the Roman Catholic Church is called upon to provide leadership⁹.

What is inter-faith dialogue in the Indian context today? It is of course not merely encouraging Christians to converse or discuss with people of other faiths, though the rendering of the term 'Dialogue' in Indian languages means almost exclusively that¹⁰; nor is it merely an activity of priests and theologians who are concerned with the doctrinal aspects of religions. It is also more than, as is often said in scholarly circles, "the mutual enrichment of partners in [dialogue]" (whatever that may mean!). Inter-faith dialogue has a much more dynamic demand in India.

It should take place at the level of the ordinary masses so that these masses, belonging to different religions and ideologies, are empowered to seek and effect social transformation among themselves. This is probably what the participants of the Inter-faith Live-in at Bombay in October 1988 meant when they wanted inter-faith dialogue to

develop into a movement throughout the country that will touch every aspect of our national life¹¹.

This is also probably why the 1992 Asian Colloquium on the Social Doctrine of the Church, held at Pattaya city, Thailand recommended that

9 Credit should go to the Catholic Church for being a pioneer in this field through Robert de Nobili already in the 17th century, though the motive behind the dialogue programmes of de Nobili and others until recent times has been missiological.

10 Some samples: Bengali – *sanlap*; Sanskrit – *samvad*; Hindi – *samvad*; Telugu – *samvadamu*; Kannada – *samvada*; Malayalam – *samvadam*; Tamil – *uraiyadal*. Except the Tamil *uraiyadal*, all the other words mentioned here indicate debate or discussion, while the Tamil word itself means conversation.

11 Cf. *Statement of Delegates in Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection*, Vol. 53, No. 1 (January 1989), pp. 61, 62, 63

in the context of Asia, inter-religious dialogue and collaboration for authentic and total human development is a key to social transformation and harmony¹².

In other words, inter-faith dialogue should be, as Walter Fernandes describes it, "a process of humanization to replace the dehumanizing experiences of exploitation which the masses have in the name of religion"¹³. That is to say, inter-faith dialogue should be the means to bring together the liberative forces of the religions of India. For, notwithstanding the recent fundamentalist manifestations of Hinduism, Sikhism and Islam, the undeniable liberative and unifying strains in these great religions have a tremendous potential that the churches should help actualize.

This is necessary for two serious reasons:

1. By this kind of dialogue alone can we forestall the re-emergence and consolidation of the dominant sections in society who would seek to 'promote' inter-faith dialogue at the elitist level for the reinforcement of their own positions in the religious hierarchy. This concern is well articulated by the participants at the ECC programmes, especially by those coming from dalit background, who fear that the so called 'inter-faith dialogue' on obtruse doctrines and speculations is only leading them once again into the trap of a brahmin-dominated elitist religion.
2. Far from rejecting outright the role of religions in the task of social transformation, we need to make people of different faiths see *social change as a religious value*, to which they may respond more easily and naturally. In this way people can be helped to free themselves socially and economically by relying on their own religiousness and culture.

Inter-faith dialogue in India should therefore lead to a certain *osmosis* by which the faith and religious expressions/experiences of other peoples are not only appreciated, but also mutually appropriated. In practice it would call for a few radical changes in the ministry of the Church and the churches: for examples,

- a) training and sending Christian workers (ministers?) not to any particular parishes or pastorates, but to the human communities living in our villages and towns;

12 Cf. *The New Leader* (Madras) Vol. 150, No. 7 (April 1-15, 1992), p. 11

13 Walter Fernandes, "Social Action and Inter-religious Dialogue", *Vidyajyoti*

- b) encouraging people of different faiths and ideologies to gather together, pray and plan together in a common place, using liberative texts from the various scriptures of our land, and even going to the extent of alternatively assembling together in a Hindu temple on one day, in a mosque on the next day, in a church the next day, and so on.

In this connection, both the Catholic Church and other churches need to seriously re-think and re-interpret for themselves, such usual objections and difficulties to the kind of dialogue we have proposed as:

- a) The uniqueness of Christ and the Christian faith;
- b) The mandate to 'make disciples of all nations...' (Matt 28:18-20)
- c) The pitfalls of syncretistic pluralism, etc.

These difficulties however do not in any way lessen the pastoral responsibility of the churches to bring about unity among the people of our land.

IV. The Ambivalent Leader

It is here, we feel, that the churches are receiving conflicting signals from the Catholic Church. While the recent documents coming from Rome, along with the 1986 Assisi event, underline a radically new openness to inter-faith dialogue, the actual situation leaves a lot to be desired. At Assisi, for example, despite all the fanfare and pontifical patronage, the people of different faiths who gathered there could not *pray together*. The rather strange explanation offered for this by the Pope, and four years later by the head of the Pontifical Commission on Dialogue, was that the people of different religions

came together to pray, not to pray together. There was no common prayer since prayer is based on belief, and the Assisi celebration took care to avoid even the appearance of syncretism¹⁴.

This ambivalent approach to dialogue continues to condition the Catholic Church's openness to people of other faiths in India too.

Journal of Theological Reflection, Vol. 53, No. 11 (November 1989), p. 596

14 Cf. Cardinal Francis Arinze, "The Christian Commitment to Inter-religious Dialogue", *Omnis Terra* No. 204 (January 1990), pp. 10-22; the Pope's words at Assisi quoted in Paul Puthanangady (ed.), *Sharing Worship: Communicatio in Sacris*, Bangalore: NBCLC, 1988, p. 599

In short, the monolithic structure and doctrine of the Catholic Church seem to be more a hindrance than a help to the process of collaboration of the churches in the area of radical inter-faith dialogue.

The time therefore has come for the Roman Catholic Church, in view of the undeniably pre-eminent position it enjoys in the comity of the Indian churches, to undertake a radical review together with other churches, of such areas as the following:

1. The depth of Christian life in India
2. The role of the laity
3. The quality of priestly and religious vocation and formation
4. The content and mode of theological education
5. The impact of the Christian religion on the national milieu in bringing about a just and humane society which is equally concerned about the harmony and integrity of the entire created order.

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The Spread of Charismatic Movement Today and the Revival of Fundamentalism

The Second Vatican Council has been described as a new Pentecost in the Church, an outpouring of the Spirit in order to renew its life and activity with a view to becoming a better and more credible witness of the Gospel in the modern world. The two realities that animate this renewal are the Word of God and the Spirit. The Christian community has to be one that speaks the Word with the unction of the Spirit. But her doctrinal formulations, worship forms and structures of government had become so highly institutionalised that they lacked the emotional appeal which is so essential in any communication meant for building up relationship. The Council came as a fresh breath of the Spirit to awaken the latent energies within the Church, to stir up charisms and to infuse a sense of vitality and joy. It is this sense which makes the Church youthful and relevant in every age, and prompts her to joyously proclaim her eternal message to each new epoch¹. The Charismatic movement in the Catholic Church may be considered one of the expressions of this outpouring of the Spirit in the post-Vatican II period. However, like every gift of God, communicated through human hands, this movement can also be fraught with dangers of human manipulation and distortion; it can be used by the Christian community without really achieving the purpose of genuine renewal. In fact, in many instances this has happened. One of these, we may say, has been the revival of fundamentalism. In this short article we shall try to examine the relationship between the Charismatic movement and the revival of fundamentalism in the Church.

1 Address of Pope Paul VI to the college of Cardinals, *Osservatore Romano* (Dec. 22, 1973).

1. What is charismatic movement?

Using the words of Cardinal Suenens, we may describe this movement as one by means of which 'the Holy Spirit, the permanent object of our faith, has become a living experience'². The main characteristic of the charismatics is that they believe that the Spirit, even though already present, can become present to the same person in a decisively new way; that is, by making his presence (previously a matter of faith) a matter of experience here and now. While accepting this as a possibility with many positive benefits for an effective Christian witness, still being a new manifestation to individuals, there can be some dangers in interpreting it. We shall try to analyse some of these, not only in a theoretical way, but also taking into account certain expressions that affect the practical life of the Christian community.

a. The approach to the Bible

In the Charismatic renewal the Scriptures are regarded as a primary source of spirituality. This is quite natural because the Spirit is their author. Those in whom the Spirit acts consider themselves to be the authentic interpreters of the Scriptural Word. The use of the Scriptures is very evident in their prayer meetings. In fact it is during prayer meetings that they mainly do the interpretation of the Scriptures. In this sense it is a movement that is based on the Word of God not merely as a doctrinal reality, but a source of God-experience, especially as an event of encounter with the Spirit of the risen Christ.

b. Baptism in the Spirit

Through the laying of hands on an individual he or she experiences the risen Christ in a personal way. This experience is believed to result from certain release of the power of the Holy Spirit, usually already present within the individual by Baptism and Confirmation. It usually leads to a deep devotional life, an attraction for prayer, sacred Scripture and the sacraments, and marks the beginning of a closer union with God³. This may be seen as a revival of the Baptismal reality, present in every Christian, through a special action of the Spirit. It gives to our Baptismal life an emotional dimension in order to make it become active in prayer and action.

2 Cardinal Suenens, *Renewal and the Powers of Darkness*, London 1983 p. 52

3 Rev. Vincent M. Walsh, *A Key to Charismatic Renewal in the Catholic Church*, St. Meinrad, Indiana 1976 p. 53

c. Charisms

Charisms are gifts which the Spirit gives to persons in order to make the Church fulfil her mission in the world. These are given at Confirmation; but perhaps due to the heavy institutionalized structure of the Church, these charisms are not always fully utilized. Or it can also happen that the Spirit gives new charisms to persons to meet a particular need. In the Charismatic outpouring of the Spirit, quite often after the reception of the so-called Baptism of the Spirit, the manifestation of these gifts takes place. But it is very important to discern them in the correct way, in all their ecclesial dimensions. Some of them are prophecy, healing, gift of tongues etc. As in every gift, also here there is the danger of exhibitionism and selfish use of them unless care is taken to foster their correct evaluation and use.

2. Some possible ambiguities in the Charismatic movement

As in every movement in the Church, also in this case, there is a possibility of distortion and deviation. I would like to point out some of them briefly. In fact some of these possibilities have been actualized and it has brought discredit to this very important movement in some instances.

a. Separatism

Due to the extra-ordinary expressions of religiosity which are quite often manifested in the adherents to this movement, they can become, perhaps unconsciously, a spiritual elite, set apart from ordinary Christians. It can become a church within the Church or a church above the Church. They can claim a special place by virtue of the special manifestations of the power of the Spirit in them.

b. Absolutization of certain gifts

A danger inherent in any gift that we receive from God, is that their use is regulated by our free will. Our selfish character, in some sense, is an element that adheres to all these gifts. This is evident in some of the gifts that members of the Charismatic movement possess. I would like to mention here in a special way two of them: the gift of tongues and the gift of healing. Although both of them can be the manifestation of the Spirit for the building up of the ecclesial community and for the fulfilment of its mission, they can become exhibitionistic and magical. They

can be exercised without getting involved into the lives of the people whom the Church is called to serve, an essential condition for the efficacious exercise of any gift of the Spirit. In this context, I would like to mention the gift of exorcism. Although the liberation from evil spirits is a gift that is characteristic of the New Testament times, at times we can be very superficial in the exercise of this gift; it is possible to look at evil as something exclusively caused by the devil forgetting the fact that there are many other social, cultural and other factors that have contributed to it. Unless the Christian is ready to get involved in this world as Jesus Christ did, he cannot truly fulfil his mission as liberator with Christ.

c. Absence of social concern

One of the most important action of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament is the denunciation of the oppressive structures. This is very clear in the manifesto of Jesus⁴, pronounced under the impulse of the Holy Spirit. In the case of many Charismatic groups, the experience of the Spirit is very much restricted to moments of prayer. The Charismatic groups are often identified as prayer groups. The socio-economic reality is rarely found to be a concern of these groups. This gives the impression that the Charismatic movement takes the Church away from the real problems of the world and from the true mission of the Church. The action of the Spirit should lead to change in the society, a necessary condition for the realization of the new creation which the Spirit of Jesus wants to effect.

d. Literal interpretation of the Bible

The Word of God comes to the Church from the Holy Spirit. The Bible is quite often taken by the Charismatic groups as the Word of God almost in an exclusive sense, without realizing that God's Word cannot be imprisoned in a book, however holy it is; it is wider than the Bible itself. At times they seem to forget that the Bible is the Word that the Spirit speaks through the believing community within its cultural and social context. It is the Good News for a particular community which because of its foundational character has become a norm for the Church

4 . Luke 4:16-22

and the world, not however, in an exclusivistic sense. As *Dei Verbum* says: "the Sacred Scriptures of both Old and New Testament are like a mirror in which the pilgrim Church on earth looks at God"⁵. Therefore the literal interpretation of the Bible, considering the words of the Bible as directly spoken by the Spirit, independently of the community and the life-situations, can cause distortion and disorientation with regard to the Bible as the Word of the Spirit.

e. Negative attitude to other religions

One of the characteristics of the members of Charismatic movement is their negative attitude to other religions, considering them as totally wrong and outside the action of the Holy Spirit. In a country like India, where the Spirit has been active very intensely in religious men and women, where wonderful expressions of God-experience are embodied both in its religious Scriptures and in religious groups, the possessors of the Spirit of Christ should be able to discern His presence as did the early Church at Ephesus⁶. Moreover, II Vatican Council which is the solemn new Pentecost or the official outpouring of the Spirit on the Church as a whole, if we may say so, has explicitly accepted the presence of the Spirit in other religions⁷. The Charismatic movement which is supposed to be the continuation of this official Pentecostal movement in the Church cannot ignore its positive affirmations in this regard. Hence the negative attitude of the Charismatics towards other religions arouses suspicions about the genuineness of the renewal movement.

3. Fundamentalism

It is very difficult to define fundamentalism. What we can do is to describe a few characteristics which have caused the labelling of some people as fundamentalists⁸.

a) *A very strong emphasis on the inerrancy of the Bible, the absence from it of any sort of error.* This leads one towards a more literal interpretation of the Scriptures because the purpose of reading the Bible is to understand what God says about Himself and about the truths that are eternally valid; this approach does not take into account the fact that the Word of God can

5 *Dei Verbum* n. 7

6 Acts, 11:15-18

7 Cfr. the Decree *Ad Gentes* and the Declaration on *Non-Christiann Religions*.

8 James Barr, *Fundamentalism*, London 1977 p. 1

become a saving Word only in the context of a human community that listens to it and interprets it in the context of its life-situation. It looks at the Bible as a book that contains all the answers to human problems, without realizing that the Bible can help solve these problems only in collaboration with human 'beings' living in a particular historical, social and cultural context. The 'divine character of the Word is so much emphasized that the human element is almost disregarded.

b) *A strong hostility to modern theology and to the methods and results and implications of modern critical study of the Bible.* Theology is reflection on faith understood as relationship between God and the human in his/her historical, existential situation. Theology cannot, therefore, make formulations that are absolutely valid for all times. Fundamentalists tend, instead, to make such formulations of faith. They do not take into account the understanding of humans and the world that is constantly evolving. They would almost request the believer to be irrational and anti-intellectual with regard to the acceptance of the scientific data vis-à-vis the acceptance of faith formulations.

c) *An assurance that those who do not share their religious viewpoint are not really 'true Christians' at all.* This creates in the believer a sense of superiority and an attitude of religious arrogance, which is deemed to be supported by Divine authority. There is no possibility of openness to truth regarding other people, including other religions. The only thing to be done, it would seem, is to convert others to their convictions which, they believe, are divinely assured. All interpretations of the Bible are conditioned by this preconceived idea of superiority and inerrancy on the part of the Christian believer. At times this can lead the fundamentalist even to persecute others because he believes that in the face of truth there is no other option than the imposition of his own conviction on them.

4. The effects of fundamentalism on the renewal movement of Vatican II

The change that has taken place in the Church after Vatican II is one of openness to the world and secular realities. Such an attitude of openness will undoubtedly affect the life of the Church on all aspects, including the formulation of faith and interpretation of the Bible. The Christian community cannot formulate its faith

ignoring the life of the world in the midst of which it has been called to respond to God's Word. Undoubtedly this had to bring with it uncertainties and insecurities in a society which had lived so far with the absolute assurance of its superiority over other religions and ideologies, in a society which was sure of itself as the community of the saved. The result is that, after the initial enthusiasm and openness in the immediate post-Vatican II period, we witness a tendency in many Christian groups to slow down the renewal movement, look at it with suspicion and even close itself against any change, and foster the return to pre-Vatican II period. The fundamentalist attitude is shown in trying to return to the faith formulas of the past, to revive the liturgies of the pre-Conciliar period, to look with suspicion at all modern efforts at interpretation of the Bible and faith formulations of the present.

5. The relationship between charismatic movement and fundamentalism

While on the one hand both the Council and the Charismatic movement claim that they are the instruments the Spirit is using to create a new Church and through it a new humanity, the approaches that both make do not seem always to be along the same line. I would put these different approaches in the following way: the Council has given to the Church a thrust that makes her go out of her ghetto into the wide world; it has placed the Church in a movement that is more horizontal, more dialogical, more diaconal in the fulfillment of her mission towards the world; it may be called a movement from above that makes the Church enter into the world in order to be immersed in it as the leaven. The Charismatic movement, instead, seems to have limited the action of the Spirit to the vertical dimension; it gives the impression that the role of the Spirit in the Christian community is to make it become a community of God-experience closed in on itself. The confession of faith 'Jesus is Lord' seems to remain on the level of a static faith formula imparting to the faithful an assurance that Jesus Christ is alive in them; but He does not make the community establish His Lordship opposing all the forces of evil, oppression and human exploitation which are the true obstacles to the coming of the Kingdom of God.

The lack of enthusiasm for the implementation of Vatican II, we saw, was very closely associated with the revival of

fundamentalism. Charismatic movement with its aureola of God-experience has strengthened this fundamentalistic trend in the Church. Although many of those who advocate a return to the pre-Vatican II period would oppose the Charismatic movement, there is a lot of similarity between both because both do not seem to favour the genuine Vatican II renewal with all its implications for the emergence of a new Church. We shall now examine these similarities:

a. The attitude to the Bible

The literal approach to the Bible which some charismatic groups follow is very much similar to the conservative approach to the same advocated by the lovers of pre-Vatican II theology. In the case of Catholics, their position is based on the teaching of the Church before Vatican II, while in the case of other Christian denominations and especially the sects, this manner of interpreting the Scriptures during prayer meetings seems to be the ideal response that one can give to the Word of God. The ecclesial role in the interpretation of the Word is minimized, this being replaced by the Spirit that is active in each individual. The consequence is that the Spirit is often falsely identified with the subjective feelings of each person; He is as if the One who merely offers satisfaction and consolation to a few elite individuals who in their turn can become very absolute in the affirmation of their subjective personal experiences of the Word of God.

b. Irrational approach to faith

It is true that faith is primarily an act of relationship. But the intellectual element cannot be ruled out, especially in its formulation, which is the role of the magisterium. In the fundamentalist approach, the subject of this formulation can be reduced to the individual who has had an experience of the Spirit. This person does not care to relate his experience to the rest of the community and the world around him; he becomes a norm for all others; his feelings acquire an authoritarian character. He imposes it on others on the plea that he has the Spirit. One who, using his intelligence, questions his position is considered opposed to the Spirit. One of the attitudes of the Charismatics that has very much intrigued me is their negative attitude to anyone who

opposes them; they seem to feel that any one who questions them is questioning the Holy Spirit.

c. Fatalistic interpretation of eschatology

We know that the Spirit has a prominent role to play in the creation of the new earth and new heaven. The Spirit plays this role by acting in human history, guiding it as it progresses towards its final goal with the collaboration of humans. It is going to be a new creation which will result from the joint action of the spirit of humans and the Spirit of God. Fundamentalists as well as some Charismatics at times would like to describe this new world as something that emerges from an apocalyptic cataclysm. What the believer has to do is to remain in prayer and waiting for the event to take place. Here we find a very close collaboration between Charismatics and fundamentalists.

d. Distorted interpretation of evil and sickness

Taking for granted that sickness and evil are caused by evil spirits, the result of a fundamentalistic interpretation of the Bible, the Charismatics give great importance to the healing sessions through prayer and invocation of the Spirit. Although we should never deny that prayer can heal the sick, it should never be forgotten that the eradication of evil is possible only with the collaboration of the human spirit. For this every human should undergo a thorough conversion of heart. This change of heart is the first action of the Spirit. If this is neglected, the healing sessions will degenerate into magical shows. Besides, to attribute all evil to the devil is to escape the real issue at stake, the change of the sinful structures of society. The fundamentalistic attitude to faith and salvation can contribute towards the neglect of this aspect. Charismatic healing sessions can confirm this attitude by placing these sessions in an atmosphere of spiritual experience.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that the Charismatic movement is a providential manifestation of the Spirit in the Church in order to bring into her life a new unction, a new energy and a renewed vitality in the fulfillment of her mission. If it remains merely on the level of spiritual experience, prayer and exhibitionistic gifts, it can not only prevent the true renewal from taking place, but

also create chaos and disorder in the Christian community. Instead of building up the Church by the power of the Spirit, it can destroy the Christian community itself through an individualistic, subjective attitude to the action of the Spirit and our response to Him. In fact, today this is happening not only in the Catholic Church, but in almost all main line Churches. The increase in the number of sects is an alarming signal for all. It is very symptomatic that at times it is these very same Charismatic prayer groups that degenerate into sects or join the existing sects. In order to avoid this, it is necessary to renew the Charismatic movements in such a way that the people are helped to respond to the Spirit in an integral way; the members of the Charismatic group should help to build up genuine Christian communities of fellowship, open to the needs of the world around them and to people of all religions and ideologies.

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The Rite Question in India

Is there No Way Out?

Introduction

Discussions on the Rite-question between Latins and Orientals of the Catholic Church in India often become emotionally charged for the obvious reason that all of us are somehow involved in it and are either on the one side or on the other whether we like it or not. The present writer belongs to the ancient Church of St. Thomas Christians, and naturally shares to a great extent the views and feelings of that Church. However, I would like to distance myself from the hardcore Orientalists who might say that "the Way of Thomas" and "the Way of Peter" have nothing to do with each other. I believe, on the contrary, that both Latins and Orientals share in one and the same Gospel, the same Apostolic faith, whatever be the differences in their ecclesial identity. Their unity in faith demands that they be constantly inter-related and in communion with each other. Differences should not inhibit their unity and communion.

The Oriental Church feels that it has been denied its legitimate freedom and rights for centuries and has been dominated and exploited by the Latin Church for its own self-aggrandizement. As Individual Churches having legitimate autonomy, Oriental Churches want full freedom to undertake the pastoral care of their people anywhere in India and evangelization work in any part of the country irrespective of the exclusive jurisdictional claim of the Latin Church. Over against this, the Latin Church in India strongly feels that the autonomous functioning of the Oriental Churches with regard to evangelization and pastoral care will negatively affect the unity and common witness of the Catholic Church in India, and that the extension of multi-jurisdiction in the same territory will lead to rivalry and competition between the Churches. They remind the Orientals that the need of the hour is unity and common planning whereas

the latter insists that unity should not be at the expense of legitimate autonomy and diversity.

Rite or Individual Church

The term "Rite" is of western origin and it refers to the liturgical and canonical aspects of the Church. It may imply a wrong ecclesiology that the Catholic Church is one single Individual Church with mere liturgical differences. Vatican II has corrected this notion of the Church, and rediscovered the nature of the mystery of the Church as a "Communion of different Individual Churches" which are different not only in their liturgy but also in their theology, spirituality, discipline, ministerial structures, organizational set-up etc¹. The One Church of Christ exists in the many Individual Churches which are equal in dignity, rights and obligations. What in fact exist are the different Individual Churches which make the One Church of Christ fully present in each one of them. So the full reality of the Individual Church cannot be expressed by the term "Rite". The new Latin Code has not fully eliminated the term Rite, but has modified it "Ritual Church *sui juris*" or "Autonomous Ritual Church"². The code says that it is meant only for the Latin Church, which implies the existence of other autonomous Individual Churches. So it is not a question of Rite but one of inter-ecclesial relations within the Catholic Communion.

The Catholic Church is the Communion of many Individual Churches which are in communion with one another and with the bishop of Rome who is the successor of Peter, the visible sign and focal point of the catholic communion. Within the Catholic Communion there are today about 20 Individual Churches, such as, Coptic, Ethiopian, Antiochian, Maronite, Syro-Malabar, Syro-Malankara, Chaldean, Byzantine, Armenian etc., and most of them have today their non-Catholic counterparts. In the new ecumenical context the different Protestant Churches may be also counted as other Individual Churches. The different Individual Churches emerged in the course of history as a result of a gradual and complex process. Geographical and political factors, the individual

1 *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, no. 2 — 3: *Lumen Gentium*, no. 13; *Unitatis Redintegratio*, no. 14.

2 Canon 111, no. 1; Canon 112, nos. 1-2.

experience of the Apostles handed down to the early Apostolic communities, the individuality of the Apostles and founders of different communities, and above all, the differentiations in the socio-cultural milieu of the communities which responded and received the Gospel *sui modo*, all these contributed to the formation of the different Individual Churches.

Inter-ecclesial relations in India

There are three Catholic Individual Churches in India: they are the Syro-Malabar Church, the Latin Church and the Syro-Malankara Church. The Syro-Malabar Church has its origin, according to ancient traditions, in the preaching of the Apostle Thomas. Until the 16th century it was the only Church in India, and it was known as the Indian Church of St. Thomas or St. Thomas Christians of India. From very early times there existed certain historical connections and relations among the Churches of Mesopotamia, Persia and India, all of which claimed their origins from the preaching of the Apostle Thomas or his immediate disciples. The Chaldean Syrian Liturgy was common to all of them. We know that the formation of the ancient liturgical families was the result of a gradual historical process which became completed or settled only by the 9th century, and the liturgy of the Syro-Malabar Church was brought to them by their Metropolitans whom they received from the Persian Church. We have scant knowledge of the early history of St. Thomas Christians of India and several areas still remain shrouded in darkness.

The Latin Church in India has its origin in the missionary work of the Portuguese who came to India in the 16th century primarily for commercial and political ends. St. Francis Xavier was the champion among these missionaries who worked mainly on the western and eastern coasts of South India. As soon as the Portuguese established themselves in India both politically and ecclesiastically they began to interfere in the affairs of the St. Thomas Christians and tried to bring them under their jurisdiction. Towards the end of the 16th century when bishop Mar Abraham died, the Portuguese took control of the St. Thomas Christians by preventing the arrival of their new bishops from Persia. 1599 was the darkest year in the history of St. Thomas Christians when Archbishop Alexis Dom Menezes of Goa convened a Synod at Diamper in Kerala, brought the St. Thomas Christians under

the Padroado rule, made radical reforms in that Church divesting many of its oriental and Indian elements, and a process of Latinization was initiated vigorously³. The All-India jurisdiction of this Church was suppressed, and Latin bishops were imposed on them against their will. In 1610 the whole of India was divided into Provinces of the Latin Church, and the jurisdiction of St. Thomas Christians was confined to the southern tip of India.

The history of the Syro-Malankara Church has its connections with St. Thomas Christians' resentment towards and reaction to their Latin rulers who mutilated and deformed their age-old ecclesial heritage and traditions. In 1653 the representatives of a large section of St. Thomas Christians gathered at Mattancherry and, by what is known as the Coonan Cross Oath, refused to accept their ecclesiastical rulers and separated themselves. This was the beginning of the tragedy of a series of separations and divisions among the St. Thomas Christians. Although many of them were gradually brought back to the Latin administration, the separated group in 1665 organized themselves under the leadership of a Syrian bishop from Antioch, and thus the Jacobite Church happened to be established in India. Later on there were various movements among the Jacobites at different periods of history for reunion with the Catholic Church. The movement gathered momentum when the Syro-Malabar Church in 1895 got indigenous bishops. In 1930 a group of Jacobites under the leadership of Archbishop Mar Ivanios reunited with the Catholic Church, and they are the Syro-Malankara Church of today.

Two major problems of the Oriental Churches in India

The problems concerning the inter-ecclesial relations in India should be understood in this historical context of the three individual Churches. We shall very briefly explain two major problems faced by the Oriental Churches in India. The first is their lack of freedom to undertake evangelization-work in the different parts of the country owing to the jurisdictional monopoly of the Latin Church all over India. And the Latin Church strongly opposes any extension of the jurisdiction of the Oriental Churches into its territory holding firmly to the principle of "One territory, one bishop, one jurisdiction".

A Church becomes what it is by its mission; in other words, it is its *raison d'être*. Vatican II emphasized this point and declared that the Church is essentially missionary⁴. Hence no Church can be indifferent to its mission and leave its missionary obligation to other Churches. And in India there is tremendous scope and need for evangelization whatever be the meaning we give to the concept of evangelization. In this context one must remember the enormous missionary potential of the Oriental Churches in India, which are abundantly blessed today with vocations to religious and clerical life. In the past, for the Syro-Malabarians, to become a missionary meant leaving his/her own Church and joining the Latin Church which alone was entitled to undertake any mission work in India. And thousands of priests, religious brothers and sisters had to make such an exodus from their mother Church in order to fulfil their missionary vocation. Indeed, they did not regret it, and the Latin Church in India is today what it is largely because of their selfless and dedicated work. But this pattern should not be the only option for the mission of the Orientals in India. They must be able to undertake evangelization work *as a Church* outside their own limited territories. The freedom for evangelization and the equal dignity of all the Individual Churches must be respected, however small these Churches may be. "An original, authentic and apostolic Indian community is practically, as a Church, kept out of this field (of evangelization), while its members are recruited as missionaries setting the situation for them to give up their ecclesial identity as a pre-condition"⁵. This is indeed, an unjust, artificial and abnormal situation which must be rectified at the earliest. The Church leaders who cry for justice in society, should first of all remove injustice from within the Church itself.

The second problem of the Orientals in India is comparatively new, but may be more urgent. It is the question of the pastoral care of the emigrants from their Churches. In the wake of industrialization and of the emergence of modern cities of India large numbers of Oriental Catholics from Kerala began to migrate to these cities in search of new job opportunities. It is well

4 *Ad Gentes*, no. 2

5 Cyril Mar Baselios, Paper presented at the CBCI Meeting, Trichy, 1982 See, *Christian Orient*, Vol. II, Nos. 1-2, p. 27

known that their numbers are quite sizeable in the Metropolitan cities of Bombay, Madras, Bangalore, Delhi, Calcutta etc. The spiritual and ecclesial well-being of these emigrants is an urgent and vital concern of the Oriental Churches. Large sections of these emigrants were already estranged from their own ecclesial, liturgical and spiritual traditions. In the context of their absence from their own Churches, they have no choice but to follow Latin liturgy, tradition and practice. Lack of liturgical life and religious instruction in one's own ecclesial tradition is a serious matter. The pastors of Latin dioceses are not capable of discharging the pastoral care of these emigrants properly, as they are not familiar with their ecclesial, liturgical and spiritual traditions. The Oriental Churches are forbidden to undertake the pastoral care of their folk, as they have no jurisdiction in the Latin territory. What are the solutions to these problems of the Oriental Churches in India?

Directives of Vatican II and its implementation

Vatican II clearly teaches that the Catholic Church is a Communion of different Individual Churches, where all have equal dignity, rights and obligations⁶. Speaking about the formation of the different Individual Churches the Council emphasizes their rich diversity and teaches that such differences and diversity in no way hinder unity, rather contribute to it⁷. Moreover, the Council in a very special way underlines the supreme value of the heritage and traditions of the Oriental Churches, and invites all to understand, venerate, preserve and foster this rich heritage which belongs to the universal Church⁸.

The Council, in fact, directly discussed the interecclesial problems in India and gave clear directives with regard to both problems mentioned above: "They (Oriental Churches) enjoy the same equal rights and are under the same obligations even with respect to preaching the Gospel to the whole world under the guidance of the Roman Pontiff"⁹. All the commentators of the Council documents point out that this article of the Decree on the Eastern Churches was written in view of the situation of the

6 *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, nos. 2-3.

7 *Lumen Gentium*, no. 13; 23.

8 *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, no.1; *Unitatis Redintegratio*, no.15.

9 *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, no. 3.

Oriental Churches in India where their freedom to undertake evangelization is restricted due to the exclusive jurisdiction of the Latin Church in India¹⁰. On the question of the pastoral care of the Oriental Catholic emigrants the Council gave clear directives: The Orientals have to be governed by themselves for the good of their people, and for this the Council proposed to erect their own parishes and hierarchy wherever it is needed.

"... where there are faithful, of a different rite, the diocesan bishop should provide for their spiritual needs either through priests or parishes of that rite, or through an episcopal vicar endowed with the necessary faculties. Wherever it is fitting, the latter should also have episcopal rank. Or, the Ordinary himself may perform the office of an Ordinary of different rites. If, for certain reasons, these arrangements are not feasible in the eyes of the Apostolic See, then a proper hierarchy for the different rites is to be established"¹¹.

But these directives of the Council were not fully implemented in India even after 25 years. However, it must be mentioned that by 1977 some seven mission dioceses were carved out of the Latin territory in Central and North India and given to the Syro-Malabar Church for its mission work. As no creative step was taken by the Latin bishops regarding the pastoral care of the Oriental emigrants, in 1968 Pope John Paul I appointed Mar Antony Padiyara, the then Archbishop of Changanacherry, as Apostolic Visitor for the Syro-Malabarians residing outside Kerala to study and report to the Holy See the situation of the emigrants, and to propose ways and means for implementing the directives of Vatican II. In 1970 the visitor submitted his report to which the Latin bishops of India resented by giving various memoranda insisting that the extension of multijurisdiction in other parts of India will be detrimental to the unity of the Catholic Church in India¹². In 1982 at the Plenary Session of the CBCI held at Trichy these interecclesial problems in India were openly discussed, but no solution was reached. Therefore a special Committee of

10 *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, edited by H. Vorgrimler London, 1967, Vol. 1, p. 315

11 *Christus Dominus*, no. 23

12 *Latin-Oriental Relations and the Mission of the Church in India: A document submitted by the Latin Bishops of India to His Holiness Pope John Paul II, 1982.*

Bishops was set up by the CBCI to further study these questions and propose solutions. But no progress was ever made either in the discussions of the Committee or those of the CBCI. In the meantime in 1982 the Oriental bishops met and discussed the question of the restructuring of the CBCI on a federal basis in the tenure of the Latin Code which provides functional autonomy to the different Individual Churches or "Ritual Churches *sui juris*".

As the CBCI discussions reached nowhere and interecclesial problems were dragged on, Pope John Paul II intervened by setting up a Committee of Cardinals to suggest solutions to these problems, and finally in 1987 the Pope wrote a historic letter to all the bishops of India. The Pope reiterated the directives and teachings of Vatican II, and asserted the rights of the Oriental Churches to have their own Episcopal Conferences, their right to undertake evangelization work with the coordination of the CBCI. The Holy Father also reminded the Latin bishops of their task to provide as soon as possible adequate pastoral care to the Oriental Catholic emigrants according to the directives of Vatican II, and entrusted its execution to the Roman Congregations responsible for the affairs of the Eastern and Latin rites after due consultations with the Latin bishops. In the letter the Pope also announced the erection of a new Syro-Malabar Eparchy in the Bombay-Pune region for the emigrants with the effect of multi-jurisdiction, as the situation there was mature for such an action.

The Letter of the Pope had another immediate result: The CBCI General Body Meeting held at Kottayam in 1988 finalized the restructuring of the CBCI by establishing three different Episcopal Conferences representing the three Individual Churches. But the CBCI would continue to function as a Co-ordinating Body. It has been agreed that matters exclusively pertaining to an Individual Church will be decided by the Individual Church itself and not by the CBCI. But for all practical purposes the functioning of the CBCI is still continued intact.

This is the situation today in interecclesial questions. The problems are not yet solved. There is still misunderstanding, suspicion, fear, lack of trust and tension among the three Churches. More discussions, study and consultations among the Churches are needed. The theological issues involved in these problems have to be sorted out and thoroughly discussed at various levels.

I am extremely happy to report that the Indian Theological Association has finally decided to deal with the "Rite-Question" after a lot of hesitation. An Association of Indian theologians naturally cannot solve these administrative problems. But they can clarify the theological issues involved and help remove misunderstanding, suspicion and fear among the three Churches. The theologians have a prophetic task of challenging their respective Churches and showing them new alternatives.

Some theological issues

It seems to me that the concepts of jurisdiction, unity and mission need radical rethinking and theological clarification before settling the issues of the "Rite-question". Is not "One territory, one bishop, one jurisdiction" an outdated concept and practice in a pluralistic society? We are no longer in the situation of the Roman empire where the concept and practice of jurisdiction originated. It was a political, administrative and purely secular concept. The empire was divided into Prefectures, Dioceses and Provinces under respective administrative authorities who had jurisdiction in their own territories and controlled all affairs of their people, political, economic, cultural and religious. Centralization and conformity were the key to the stability of the empire. Diversity and non-conformity were suspect, condemned and eliminated. Our society today is pluralistic, and it is evident that it will be so all the more. We can no more insist that there should be only one religion, one denomination, one Rite, one language, one culture, one caste or one political party in one place. We have no other alternative but to coexist in one and the same place, and to enter into dialogue and fellowship respecting each one's identity and autonomy. Could it not be possible that there be many bishops in the same place or city, bishops belonging to different Rites or denominations, not as rivals or threats, but as brothers and colleagues united in collegiality and communion for the common cause of the Gospel? Multi-jurisdiction in itself is not necessarily an evil, and in fact it is the only alternative in a pluralistic and ecumenical situation like that of ours.

In our discussion on the interecclesial relations in India one of our major concerns has been the unity of the Catholic Church in India. But what is our concept of the unity of the Church? I am afraid that the image of a monolithic Church, a centralized

Catholic Church, is still lingering in our minds that the unity of the Church is often envisaged as uniformity with one single administrative structure and uniform discipline. Such a monolithic unity is dismissed today by the contemporary Communion model ecclesiology as endorsed by Vatican II. If the Catholic Church is a Communion of different Individual Churches *sui juris*, its unity cannot be an administrative unity either at the universal or at the local level. This is not to deny the role of the Papacy in the communion of the Churches: but its role and its functioning require a new understanding and style of action. At the local level too, "all in each place" united under one single head is an outdated model in the context of the plurality of Individual Churches in one place. The existence of the different historical Churches within the same territory need not necessarily mean division; on the contrary they could witness to the unity and rich diversity of the mystery of the One Church, one complementing another and enhancing the beauty and catholicity of the Church.

The Christian Churches in all places have to be a sign and model of the unity of the whole humankind by being and becoming a "Conciliar Fellowship" manifesting always both their unity and diversity. According to it all the different Churches sit in council as equals, united in the same faith and the same sacraments, and express their communion visibly and effectively by common deliberations and actions both at the universal and local levels. Such a concept and practice of unity will be all the more relevant in India in the context of Hinduism which is marked by an enormously rich variety and diversity with an underlying deeper unity.

What exactly is the mission of the Church in India to which both the Latin and Oriental Churches are committed? Is it "conquering territories and peoples" as it was done during the colonial period? Or, is it to continue the mission and ministry of Jesus by proclaiming the arrival of the Kingdom of God? In a country where 22.5% are scheduled castes and tribes, and 52% other backward classes, where poverty, misery, malnutrition, discrimination of castes, exploitation and injustice are rampant, the mission of the Church should be the proclamation of the Good News of the Kingdom of God to these people by joining them in their struggles and movements for freedom, justice and equality. The Church

has indeed a spiritual mission to be the leaven and catalyst in transforming the society and all people to a deeper spirituality.

In a country where a powerful cultural and religious revivalism is taking place, where each religious and linguistic group is asserting its own identity, the mission of the Church should not be exporting and transplanting what is ready-made to their midst which is quite alien to their culture and ethos. All the Individual Churches are the products of history shaped by particular peoples and cultures. Should we deny this privilege to our tribals and adivasis of shaping a Church of their own according to their culture and ethos? Are our Churches, both Oriental and Latin, committed to initiate this process of inculturation in their missions? In this process new Individual Churches have to be born in the new missions. The present Individual Churches themselves have to be transformed, inculturated and updated in interaction¹ with their new experiences in the missions.

Conclusion

The Catholic Individual Churches in India have no option but to sort out the issues among them, and to take appropriate decisions and action according to the directives of Vatican II. They shall not leave this responsibility of theirs to Rome; they have to grow out of their childish dependence. They have both to witness to their unity in a more effective and visible manner and to respect one another's freedom and legitimate autonomy. The intimate unity and communion among them must be visibly expressed through frequent consultations and deliberations under the CBCI, and whatever they could do together shall never be done separately. As our ultimate mission is to promote and extend the Kingdom of God and not merely to enlarge the boundaries of our own Churches, we need closer co-operation and co-ordination with regard to our mission in India today. Communion among the Churches is expressed in the most sublime and sacramental way in the joint-celebration of the Eucharist, whatever may be the differences with regard to the liturgical rites of the Churches. It is scandalous and rather shocking to see that some of the Oriental and Latin bishops today refuse to join the celebrations of each other. Does it not amount to denying our Catholic Communion?

At any rate the freedom and the legitimate autonomy of the Oriental Churches with regard to evangelization and pastoral care of their emigrant members must be acknowledged and respected by the Latin Church in India. Wherever there is a sizeable number of Oriental Catholics, they must have the freedom to organize themselves *as a Church*, and separate Eparchies must be established wherever they are deemed opportune and necessary. The bishops of the different Catholic Individual Churches in each place shall meet together frequently and no chance must be given to competition, rivalry and prestige, and some inter-ecclesial structures must be set up to monitor and guide inter-ecclesial relations and co-ordination. For the effective evangelization work of the Oriental Churches more territories and dioceses must be carved out of the present Latin Provinces and Dioceses and entrusted to them with greater generosity and confidence on the part of the Latin Church. This policy seems better suited today to eliminate all kinds of possible rivalry and competition among the Churches taking into account the human elements in the Churches. If the Indian Catholic Churches themselves are unable to live with the reality of ecclesial pluralism today and to reach an agreement and mutual understanding on this matter, what would be the chance for the success of ecumenism in India!

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Religious Women and Their Theological Education

Introduction

This topic is of keen interest to me as I believe every christian, and especially every woman needs to be theologically formed. How much more then for the religious woman with her special commitment and years of dedicated service! And when women get into theology it is a source of creativity, hope and even of prophecy! For I believe we as women have a tremendous role to play because we are essentially close to life and can challenge established values and doctrines which hinder life by bringing in the element of human experience. I am interested in women's theological education precisely because women's experience has been left out of traditional theology, and this I am hopeful will initiate a more wholistic and integral approach

1. The present Indian context with specific reference to women

The present Indian situation is one of serious economic crisis, and controversies rage over the remedies for resolving it. This has led the nation to succumb to the dictates of IMF and WB with its conditionalities and it has fallen a prey to neo-colonialism. The de-valuation of the rupee and liberalisation of the economy have increased inflation and raised the prices, particularly of essential goods. A Washington-based 'Bread for the World Institute' in its report 'Hunger 1990' has stated that India with a population nearing one billion by 2000 AD may have the largest number of undernourished people as against any other country in the world. This is a frightening reality. A large amount of money goes towards defence and military spending while millions starve. Stark poverty, unemployment and ill-health have led to daring dacoity.

Violence in the form of terrorism and communal riots continues to paralyse the political life in specific areas such as Punjab, Kashmir, Indo-Pakistan border and Tamilnadu. Caste has taken on ugly forms in the massacre of dalits in Tsundur, A. P. and Bara killings in Bihar. The present Bank Scam scandal is a symptom of the extent to which corruption has entered public life.

Women's context

Against this backdrop I should like to concentrate on the effects of such a situation on women in India. The March 1991 population ratio of 929 female for every 1000 male indicates a steady decline in female population. The Indian family structure is based on the patriarchal system of domination and control. This system of power relations has established norms which relegate women to silence, dependency and domesticity. Three areas essentially control women's lives: sexuality, fertility and labour.

The inbuilt violence within the patriarchal culture as well as the direct brutal violence on women discloses the shocking malaise in contemporary Indian society. Female foeticide and infanticide, dowry harassment and murders, eve-teasing and rape, wife-beating and the stranding of women with children while the man running away with another, are serious issues that women's movements grapple with concerted efforts.

The poverty and drive for survival have led masses of women to migrate to cities and different states, and even Gulf countries. The prawn industry, for instance, through inter-mediary agents has drawn masses of women to Calcutta, Bombay etc. They are lowpaid, live in subhuman shelters, and easily drawn into prostitution, however reluctant. The woman's labour as well as her body is exploited. 94% of women in India belong to the unorganised sector: cooks, domestic workers, cleaners, bidi and pappad rollers, dhobies, fisherwomen, plantation workers, agricultural daily wage earners.

Of the total female population, 80% live in rural India, mostly involved in agricultural work, with very low wages or what is paid in kind. "The number of unemployed women increased in the last decade from 153 to 219 million. Only 2.5 million in the work force are employed in the organized sector in India. In India's new trend towards industrialisation and high technology,

women again are the losers. Because they lack technical skills they are the first to be displaced. But perhaps the most unfortunate dimension to the problem is that 'women's work' is largely unrecognised, uncounted and under-valued. The conceptual paradigms and analytical tools used to discern what does and what does not constitute women's work are sex-blind; refusing any analyses of gender relations and patriarchal attitudes which have largely contributed to women's status, place and role in society¹.

2. The religious women and the need for theological education

According to the March 1991 statistics, out of a total population of 843,930,861, females numbered 406,332,932. Of these, 39.42% were literate and 61.53% were illiterate². Unfortunately, there are no statistics to indicate the state of theological education of christian women, especially religious women. A mighty number of 70,000 religious women in India, depend on the clergy and religious priests (proportionately smaller in number) for their spiritual and theological formation. While many religious women are highly qualified in the secular field, the same is not true in the area of theological education.

In the early 70's we were just a handful of religious women doing theology. "Why theology?" "Are you aiming at ordination?" are the questions often put to us by male scholastics. Though said in a lighter vein, these questions imply that theology taught in a major seminary is geared towards priestly formation; and what is a woman trying to do by getting into theology which was solely a male prerogative! This is a new situation we have ventured into....! The Post-Vatican period has awakened the CRI (Conference of Religious of India) to the need for centres, which would offer basic theological formation for religious women. The Institute Mater Dei at Goa, Sudeep at Bangalore, Jeevan Jyothi at Hyderabad, Lumen Institute at Tindivanam, T. N., and various other centres give a ten-month course annually. Over the past decade or two, many of the major seminaries have opened out to women religious to avail themselves of the BTh and MTh courses.

1 Corrine Kumar D'Souza, 'New Time Beginning', *Sangarsh*, an occasional magazine of Vimochana, Bangalore, 1985. p. 3

2 . *Indian Express*, March 25, 1991

a) A felt-need to verbalise my faith

Over the past centuries, even today, religious women's beliefs, expressions of their faith, spirituality as well as their role and mission, were articulated, decided and thrust upon by "men of good will". Male scholars, theologians and clergy were spiritual advisers, chaplains and resource persons, who were highly revered. They patronised and maintained a "spiritual dependency" of religious women, while the latter smugly remained passive recipients. At retreats, provincial and general chapters, a male chaplain has to be usually present according to the norms of the sacred congregation for Religious! In fact, religious life which began as a charismatic movement has been institutionalised within a canonical framework by a male hierarchy. And women who wished to be 'religious' had to fit into this 'male-defined' religious state. For too long religious women have been passive, silent or silenced.

It is urgent, vital and necessary that religious women of India, break out of this silence, become aware of their condition of dependency, recognise their dignity as women, and take responsibility for their life and mission. Over the years, religious women have flocked for theological renewals, long and short courses to get themselves theologically updated. They have begun to realise their personal need to verbalise their faith and convictions, within the challenging context of India today. The rapid changes, the consumerist tendencies, risks of everyday life, violence against human life, patriarchal domination and atrocities done to women confront and call in question one's faith-response! It is here that theological skills equip and enable one to seek and find meaning and purpose in one's life and commitment, give birth to love and hope, clarifying and linking one's faith with all the major concerns and dimensions of life that flow from the context!

b) Ability to spell out one's commitment and convictions

Theology can no longer be confined to libraries alone, nor is it merely an academic course or exercise. It is the understanding and expression of one's faith-commitment, and is an integral part of a living experience, wherein one is constantly called to choose life, to take a stand, to believe! Whenever the question

"Why do you do theology?" was raised to religious women doing theology, several of them have given this response: "the demands of everyday life, awareness of our dependency on male clergy and the condition of women, especially the way most religions legitimise female subordination, have evoked this need, to clarify my position. To be able to personally spell out my convictions and values, to make choices for my mission, to be truly committed. I need to acquire the knowledge and skills that theological formation offers". The task of theology then is to enable persons to think for themselves and arrive at a reflected activity which leads to personal and societal transformation, as envisioned and lived by Jesus of Nazareth. Rooted in faith, theology is concerned with God's stand for humanity, for quality of life, human relationships free of dominance, and a just sharing of the earth's resources.

Theological studies can remain purely intellectual, unrelated to life. Exposure to people's context will allow for confrontation and sharpen one's critical consciousness. People's struggle for survival, women's rights and issues need to be critically analysed by social sciences and in the light of faith. Theology as a critical reflection on the praxis leads to an encounter between the realities of life and faith and moves one to a liberative response. In every affirmation of life, of justice and freedom, God's presence is latent and one can recognise the mystery of dying and rising in one's life. Theological reflection, for religious social activists, deepens the basis and meaning of their prophetic mission.

3. Consequences for the patriarchal, institutional Church

We raise a pertinent question here: "Does theological education lead to emancipation?" A lot depends on the openness of the student of theology and the integrity of and the challenges put across by the teacher of theology. It will not only build a positive self-image and confidence, foster independent thinking, but go further in moulding values and convictions, sharpen their critical consciousness, that will help religious women break out of their silence and submissiveness to speak out and be assertive!

a) Critique of the ecclesial symbolism

The process of emancipation leads the religious woman to become aware of the status of women in the church and criticise the

ecclesial symbolism. Eph. 5:22-23: "Wives, be subject to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the Church, his body, and is himself its Saviour." The analogy is thus illustrated³:-

in relation to governing

Christ = head = husband and master = priest = man
 Church = body = wife and servant = - = woman

in relation to worship

Man = reason = intelligence = truth = pure (compatible with sacredness)

Woman = heart = affectivity = sexuality = impure (incompatible with sacredness)

Such an ecclesial symbolism creates an inferiority complex in women, and a feeling of uncleanness, or unworthiness to stand up to men. Women have to identify patriarchy as one that makes man the "norm" with a dominant status and role in the church. It stands not only for the subordination of women, but connotes a "father-ruled" society: of master over slave, ruler over subjects, of racial and ethnic superiority over colonised or conquered people. Centrist structures of domination have disfigured the christian religion through the course of history. Such a theological and ecclesiastical symbolism projects the image of a male Divinity that sanctions the alienation of women, keeping their role within male-defined parameters.

The Church must renew or reconstruct its ecclesial symbolism so as to be true to Jesus' counter-cultural movement symbolised by table-fellowship (Mt. 22:1-10) or expressed by Paul in *Gal. 3:28*. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

b) Re-affirmation of the discipleship of equals

Scholars are agreed that this central text *Gal. 3:28* was formulated by the Jewish Hellenistic community and could be attributed to the Pre-Pauline Missionary Movement. Paul's letters to Galatians had "freedom" as its central message (*Gal 5:1-13; 1:4*). "As a

3 Lise Baroni, 'The Creative Emergence of Women Working in the Church', *Women For What World? In What Church?* XV General Assembly of the Canadian Religious Conference, May 28 - June 2, 1984, ATC Publications Bangalore, 1986, p. 57

result, *eleutheria* (freedom) is the central theological concept which sums up the Christian's situation before God, as well as in this world. Therefore a slave woman who became a christian in the first century, heard this baptismal pronouncement as a ritual 'performative utterance' which not only had the power to shape the 'symbolic universe' of the christian community, but also determined the social interrelationships and structures of the church."⁴

Gal. 2:14 gives the background context of the Galatians: Paul concentrated on the abolition of religious distinctions between Jew and Greek, for it had social, ecclesial consequences. He confronts Cephas and Barnabas, who fearing the circumcised Jewish christians adhered to their Jewish purity rites regarding eating together with 'impure' Gentiles – the Greeks. Circumcision was dropped and baptism was the primary rite of initiation, which was of great significance for women. Like every other person, they could claim full membership, with the same rights and duties. "This generated a fundamental change, not only in their standing before God, but also in their ecclesial-social status and function, because in Judaism, religious differences according to the law were also expressed in communal behaviour and social practice. While one was born into Judaism – even the full proselyte could not achieve the status of the male Israelite – the christian movement was based not on racial and national inheritance lines, but on a new kinship in Jesus Christ"⁵. It implies that men and women are defined by their faith, discipleship and empowerment in the Spirit, and not by racism, classism or sexism. The church has to become free of patriarchy and be faithful to the discipleship of Equals.

c) Traditional theology that justifies
women's inequality is questioned

Religious women are awakening to some hard facts, namely, the theology they have imbibed and internalised is "sex-biased". Traditional theology has legitimised the inequality of man and woman as if 'ordained by God' and supportive myths have been woven into scripture to substantiate this (Genesis chps. 2+3): (i) The identification of the "fullness of the *imago dei*" with the male,

4 Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, SCM Press, New York, 1983, p. 210.

5 *Ibid.* p. 210

(ii) woman is derivative of man, subsequently subordinate to him and (iii) the identification of woman with evil, as root cause and source of sin. These have coloured traditional theology and interpretations of scripture.

Probing the sources of sexual inequality, Margaret Farley states, "Ancient myths identifying women with chaos, darkness, matter and sin, echo clearly in the christian interpretation of concupiscence of the body as defiled, or sexuality as contaminating, and therefore of woman as temptress, a threat, a danger and a symbol of sin. In christian thought the notion of woman became entrenched in the theology of original sin. The early christian insights of woman's equality in the grace of baptism, that if anyone is in Christ, he/she is a new creation (2 Cor 5:17 and Gal. 3:28), were soon obscured. These insights were transposed into the eschatological future. She had to be redeemed either by marriage and procreation, or by virginity"⁶.

This one-sided and sex-biased character of theology has to be rethought and freed from its basic foundation of method and male-rationality. In classical theology, women have not only been negated, but have been "scapegoated for sin and marginalized in both original and redeemed humanity"⁷.

Primarily theology has to come to terms with women's experience in India of triple oppression: class, caste and gender. Politically women are powerless, economically exploited, religiously and culturally bound by patriarchal values and norms, customs and traditions. Feminist hermeneutics appeals to women's experience as a context of interpretation. Because women's experience had been traditionally excluded from the articulation of theology, women's critique and feminist liberation theology appear all the more necessary. "Women's experience explodes as a critical force, exposing classical theology, including its foundational tradition in scripture, as shaped by male experience rather than human experience. Women's experience makes the androcentric bias of the

6 Margaret Farley, 'Sources of Sexual Inequality in the History of Christian Thought', *The Journal of Religion*, Vol 56/2, April 1976, p. 166

7 Rosemary Radford Ruether, 'Feminist Interpretation: A Method of Correlation', *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* edited by Letty Russell, Westminster Press, 1986, p. 116.

original formulations and on-going interpretations of the tradition, visible, rather than hidden behind the mystifications of divine authority. It throws the universality of the claims of tradition into question."⁸

Women today have gone ahead making their contributions in different areas of contemporary theology, such as the concept and language about God, Christology, Ecclesiology, Mariology, Creation, Grace etc. These attempts not only bring in "women's experience" but go beyond the basic foundation of theology to human experience which is inclusive of both man and woman, as the starting and finishing point of the circle of interpretation, namely the liberation and humanization of theology.

4. Realism of the conflict

Quite a number of religious women find their inspiration and hope in the Jesus Movement because it upholds the egalitarian vision of Jesus who denounced any form of 'dominance-subservience' (Mt. 23; Lk 13:10-17). Fiorenza in her work of reconstructing christian origins clearly says that the interpretative key to understanding the full proclamation of Jesus is the 'discipleship of equals'⁹. But one's actual experience as woman is that of conflict rather than the realization of theological reconstruction into the discipleship of equals. The present structures of the Church – pyramidal and patriarchal – and its way of functioning go counter to the original vision of Jesus and affect women adversely.

a) Disillusionment

The realism of the conflict is seen in the frustration of hopes to change the situation within the church; when awakened, both lay and religious women find their efforts and hopes dashed, and are fast losing patience with the apathy of those in authority. Disillusioned, they have begun to withdraw, for the monolithic church pays only lip service to women's voices and appeals. Church leadership would speak of equality among unequals at sermons, seminars, research papers, but at their Synods and CBCI meetings nothing would materialise so as to bring about equal participation of women in decision-making, and in the different ministries; the question of ordination of women is not even

⁸ *Ibid.* p. 113

⁹ Fiorenza, *Ibid.* p. XIII–XV

discussed at all. Instead a 'women's desk' has been created, and no one knows what it really means. Women are no longer willing to be treated as "non-entity" and there is a growing resentment. Patriarchal church is at the crossroads, faced with a crucial question whether it should listen to and dialogue with women or lose them. The church has to be rid of its exploitative structures and freed of the shackles of sexism. Presenting a paper, 'Breaking the Silence' at the CBCI meet at Pune in January 1992, Dr. Astrid Lobo rightly said: "It is a common notion even among bishops, that the injustice of sexism is a 'women's problem', a 'women's concern'. And we as a prophetic Church, are we not called to lead the way in the struggle for gender justice?"¹⁰

b) The pain of exclusion

Women experience the pain of exclusion by the exclusively male symbolised worship, which denies their right to interpret the Word of God or proclaim the Good News just on the basis of 'being woman'. The Gospels attest that Mary of Magdala received the privilege and mandate to proclaim the Good News of the Risen Jesus! (Mk. 16:1-8). She was the most prominent of the Galilean disciples and an eminent leader in the early christian community (Lk. 8:1-3; 24:10; Mk. 15:40). The bonds of patriarchal culture have been able to erase the original mandate given to woman in the person of Mary of Magdala. How far have church authorities and theologians listened to and consulted women when framing moral laws or moral theology? Married women are the ones who are faced with crucial decisions as they struggle with repeated pregnancies and contraceptives: whether they should go in for abortion or not, and how to cope with the resultant moral guilt. Women are either insignificant or a threat to patriarchal domination and authority. "The preoccupation for male authority over women is pagan, anti-Gospel. It cannot be redeemed; it can only be aborted. It is a negation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ."¹¹ The church has to change and give women the feeling that their views, experience and feelings are counted, otherwise more and more women will resort to their personal judgement.

10 Astrid Lobo Gajiwala, 'Breaking the Silence', in *Word & Worship*, Vol. XXV, No. 1, January-February, 1992, p. 41

11 Martin, 'Womanist Interpretations of the New Testament', in *Journal of Feminist Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 2, Fall 1990, USA., p. 60

5. A new ecclesial event —

Women entering into a Bond

Women in the Church have begun to bond together for sharing experiences and building solidarity in order to create relationships that are egalitarian and non-exploitative. Just as WINA (= Women's Institute for New Awakening) bonds christian women and is ecumenical and disseminates women's perspectives through workshop articles and publication of books, so does WORTH (Women Religious Theologising) for religious women. WORTH considers awakening religious women as its primary target in order to gain collaborators in its goal of responding to women's issues in society, and in the church. We are aware that religious women are basically 'women' and vulnerable to sexual assault as the two incidents at Gajraula, UP, and that of Srs. Sylvia and Priya indicate. Through input workshops WORTH enables religious women to awaken themselves to their being 'woman'; through its annual theology meet fosters women's theology, starting from 'women's experience'. WORTH finds strength in religious women who are genuinely committed at the grassroots and make present the prophetic Church of Jesus. Theology from the perspective of Indian women is beginning to be felt, but more significantly, church women find strength in their bonding. . . Some Churches are ordaining women too. Women are aware of their full responsibility. Will the Catholic Church continue to resist the presence of the Feminine Spirit of God at work in the bonding and prophetic voices of women!

Conclusion

The Earth Summit at Rio de Janeiro has spelt out that our mother earth is on the brink of disaster because of the ravages of industrialisation on ecology. The crisis in our own homeland has led to the emergence of varied movements such as of Human Rights, Dalits, Ecology, Consumer Council and Women. These are all Pro-Life and recognise the dignity and worth of Human Life. These are signs of God's Reign. To create communion among all peoples and the cosmos is a Gospel Imperative. The Church which claims this mission to be hers has to witness to it through just and free relationships among its members — women and men! We hope the Church will not fail us!

Margaret Shanti

The Crisis in Priestly Formation

1. Preliminary comments

1. 1 The Oxford Dictionary gives the following meaning for the term "crisis": "turning point". The term is derived from the Greek *krisis* which signifies "decision". Although 'crisis' is often used in its pejorative sense with reference to a period of particular difficulties, uncertainty, doubt, bewilderment etc., the real concept of crisis is that of a moment in the life of a person or a human group, which demands a more or less abrupt and complete change of direction and therefore involves a choice between two ways. In other words, in the life of a person which in its totality is a continuous development of his relations with the evolving world outside, there normally occur moments in which an adjustment has to be made between his own development and the evolution of his milieu¹. Such a moment is called crisis. One also finds such moments or analogous situations in the history of thought – be it philosophical or theological which are usually referred to as a paradigm-shift².

1. 2 In a seminal article on the nature of the priestly ministry Karl Rahner observed that "The priestly office in the Catholic Church is an extremely complex entity and one which is subject to historical changes. As realized in the concrete, its form is determined not merely by the dogmatically defined nature of the Church herself, or by its own real theological nature..., but also by the concrete forms which the Church has assumed under historical influences and, arising from this, by the changing positions which

1 See J. L. Blomjous, *Priesthood in Crisis* (Milwaukee 1969) p. 9ff.

2 See J. T. Walsh, "Being Theologians in a Paradigm — Shift", *Louvain Studies*, 9 (Fall 1982) pp. 116–121

the priest has occupied within the Church as a society, as also by the role ascribed to him by secular society"³.

1. 3 The concrete living out of the priestly ministry as also formation to the priesthood is perforce influenced by not only theological (and in particular ecclesiological and sacramental) self-understanding but also sociological, cultural and other factors. This being the case, the remark of J. Leclercq is very pertinent, that "it would be an illusion to think that we shall be able to restore the priestly ministry in what might be called its pure state, one which would realize the evangelical ideal of priestly service and mediation, without any other determining factor than the Gospel itself. The priestly institution like any other, has always been stamped by the state of the society in which it existed; history gives us a lesson in relativity and consequently, modesty. The important thing, and that is the meaning of the progress taking place, is that it should be stamped by the society of today and tomorrow and not by that of the Middle Ages"⁴.

2. A glimpse at the past

2. 1 Though J. Crichton says that the Council of Trent has practically become a myth for both Catholics and Non-Catholics inasmuch as all sorts of thing are attributed to and associated with that particular Council⁵, yet one can without hesitation affirm that the Seminary set-up for Priestly formation definitely goes back to Trent⁶.

2. 2 The Council of Trent was primarily convoked to shore up Catholicism against Reformist onslaughts. As such, Trent had no explicit ecclesiology. The threefold tension created respectively by the fear of Conciliarism, interference from the new nation-states

3 K. Rahner, "The Point of Departure in Theology for Determining the Nature of the Priestly office" in *Theological Investigations XII, Confrontation II*, p.31

4 J. Leclercq, "The Priesthood in the Patristic and Medieval Church" in N. Lash and J. Rhymer, eds., *The Christian Priesthood* (9th Downside Symposium) (London 1970) pp. 74-75

5 J. D. Crichton, "Church and Ministry from the Council of Trent to the First Vatican Council" in N. Lash and J. Rhymer, eds., *The Christian Priesthood* (9th Downside Symposium) (London 1970) p. 117.

6 See *ibid.* pp. 124-125

and the Roman fear of episcopal independence, prevented any clear ecclesiology from emerging.

2. 3 The Conciliar Fathers were led by "the principle of providing for various necessities from time to time, without ever pretending to develop an integrated and complete plan which would scarcely have been understood by those lacking—as was true of the overwhelming majority of the Fathers—a clear concept of the Church; they avoided touching upon problems concerning the structure of the Church"⁷.

2. 4 This certainly had its repercussions on the understanding of the ministry since sacraments are signs of the church. If there is no clear picture of the Church, the results are predictable—the stress was strongly anti-reformist. All the same, though Trent had not been particularly creative in the theological field, it certainly did a lot by attempting to correct abuses rampant in the Middle Ages⁸.

2. 5 One among these measures, was the reformation of the episcopate by turning it back from a career to a pastoral office.

The presbyterate was still defined in terms of cult. (Trent failed to come up with a theology of the word.)⁹

2. 6 Finally Trent met the needs of the time by establishing Seminaries for the instruction and spiritual formation of the diocesan clergy¹⁰. If after Trent it was the priest in his parish who occupied the centre-stage, this must be credited to the Seminary system.

2. 7 This was situated in a post-tridentine ecclesiology which was largely Bellarminian. It was clericalist, triumphalist and juridicist¹¹—a visible society with hierarchy and due subordination of its members in an ascending scale to the Pope¹².

7 G. Alberigo, "The Council of Trent: New Views on the Occasion of its Fourth centenary" in *Concilium* 7 (September 1965) pp. 40–41

8 See J. D. Crichton *op. cit.*, p. 118

9 See *ibid.*, pp. 122ff

10. See *ibid.*, p. 124

11 These are the adjectives used by Bishop Emile De Smedt of Bruges during Vatican II to characterize this model of the church. See A. Dulles, *Models of the Church* (New York 1974) pp. 35–36

12 See *ibid.*, pp. 31–42. Also J. D. Crichton, *op. cit.*, pp. 125–127

2. 8 The image of the tridentine priest is painted by L. Cristiani¹³: "A man whose bearing, gestures, words and whole life are indicative of an equilibrium of thought and manner. Above all he is filled with the spirit of religion. In the mind of the Council the perfect priest is first and foremost the perfectly good man, virtuous, serious, judicious and conscientious. But all these qualities are to be permeated, enlivened, warmed, elevated and supernaturalized by the religious spirit which fills his being. ... Of dignified and venerable aspect, dwelling in his modest and secluded presbytery always available to the poor and unfortunate, uniquely occupied with the good of souls and the service of Jesus Christ, he is the veritable image on earth of benevolence and charity; all this is enhanced by his serene and revered countenance crowned often by a halo of white hair"¹⁴.

2. 9 The Seminary system did have its defects, viz. an excessive withdrawal from the world, a piety that was too inward-looking and a strong tendency towards the formation of the professional clergyman. However, all said and done, it was a great help and brought great benefits to the Church of the period.

3. Vatican II and its aftermath

3. 1 Vatican II came like a breath of fresh air into the Church. Anyone browsing through the so-called progressive literature of the period between Pope John XXIII's announcement of the Council in 1958 and its opening in 1962, will be surprised at the conservatism of the most progressive periodicals of the time. The Council has gone much further than what was expected¹⁵.

3. 2 The Spirit that moved the Council Fathers has clearly transcended the recorded results so that the post-Conciliar period cannot be narrowed down to the letter of the Council documents. In the words of Pope Paul VI: Henceforth *aggiornamento* will mean to us 'enlightened penetration into the spirit of the Council'

13 L. Cristiani, *Le Concile de Trente* (Paris 1948) p. 209 quoted in J.D. Crichton *loc. cit.*, p. 125 note 1

14 Crichton after quoting the said passage adds his own comment: "The perfect bourgeois in fact in a cassock" *Ibid.*

15 See for instance E. Schillebeeckx, *Vatican II A struggle of minds* (Dublin, 1963); Also Idem *Vatican II The Real Achievement* (London 1967)

and "faithful application of the directives so happily and firmly outlined in the Council".

3. 3 The Conciliar documents touch on the different facets of the christian self-understanding with the Church as its focal point¹⁶. Consequently, the post-Conciliar period saw the gradual assimilation of the implications of this new vision of the Church in her different relationships.

4. The post-Conciliar period and its problems

4. 1 The post-Conciliar period has deepened the awareness of the Christian community. This has had several implications.

4. 2 On some issues, it has modified the very questions asked, so that solutions (practical and theoretical) are not given as categorical statements between two opposed alternatives but rather expressed in the form of "both this *and* that"¹⁷.

4. 3 What was hitherto largely a search for certitude is becoming more and more a quest for understanding¹⁸.

4. 4 There is a search for a new balance between man's relationship with God and his relationship with the world. This is attributable to several factors.

— The increasing secularization of human society

— The growing pluralization of human society where the Church has often been forced to play a minority role.

4. 5 The very relationship between the Church and the world has changed. From a wholly negative attitude to the world — where the relationship was often seen in military terms — the Church is seen as the servant of the world¹⁹.

4. 6 There was then what has been called the dialectics of immutability and historicity. This symbolized the tensions which exist between self-identity on the one hand, and rapid change on the other. The dialectical balance of the existence of the

16 The majority of the documents of Vatican II treat of the Church's self-understanding of her relationship with different realities

17 See J. L. Blomjous *op. cit.*, p. 12

18 See W. J. Burghardt, "From Certainty to Understanding: The Exciting Pilgrimage of Contemporary Catholicism" in *Catholic Mind* (June '69) pp. 13-27

19 See A. Dulles, *Models of the Church* (New York 1974) pp. 83-96

modern Christian has to be found in a continuity which is open to the present and future while being faithful to the past²⁰.

4. 7 There was the issue of unity and plurality wherein the Church was not to be visualized in a static ahistorical unity often tantamount to uniformity — but an acceptance of the dynamic nature of the church realized in pluriformity.

4. 8 There was, further, the relationship of the institutional and the charismatic in its various ramifications: God's word and its human expression, obedience and freedom, sacramental and personal piety²¹.

5. The priest in the post-Conciliar period

5. 1 No group has been more affected by the post-Conciliar crisis than that of the priest. In what had been hitherto very much a clerical Church, the priest stands at the central point of the friction between the Church and the world. In fact he concretely and visibly represents (or has represented) the Church in the world. This has raised many questions regarding the nature of the priestly ministry, the role of the priest in society, his life-style etc.

5. 2 Regarding the nature of the priestly ministry

There is a growing dissatisfaction with the image of the priesthood popularized in traditional manuals²². There is a realization that since the beginning of the Constantinian era, certain dimensions of the OT priesthood were employed to describe the priestly ministry, to the detriment of Christian *diakonia*.

Further, the anti-Reformist stress present in the tridentine understanding of the priestly ministry exclusively highlighted the *potestas in corpus eucharisticum* to the detriment of the prophetic and pastoral roles.

What then is the role of a priest in a human community where Catholics form a relatively small minority? Or in a nominally Catholic community where occasions of people's participation in the sacraments are rare?

20 See W. J. Burghardt, *op. cit.*, pp.23-24; Also J. L. Blomjous *op. cit.*, pp. 33-38

21 See J. L. Blomjous, *op. cit.*, pp. 49-54. Also W. J. Burghardt *op. cit.*, p.24

2 See J. L. Blomjous, *op. cit.*, pp. 84-89

5. 3 Regarding the status of the priest in the Church

Different issues are involved here. The renewed understanding of the Church especially in *Lumen Gentium* has led to a de-clericalization of the church. Consequently the role of the priest has become far less important than in the past. Further, the fundamental equality of all the members of the People of God as also the growing insistence on the dignity of the laity (*Apostolicam Actuositatem; Christifideles Laici*) is leading to the disappearance of the secular role of the clergy.

5. 4 Regarding the status of the priest in human society

Once upon a time, the priest was considered a religious professional, and a clerical personage. With the phenomenon of secularization and the onset of specialization, the priest has lost these traditional roles. There is a search for a new way of being really and actively present in society not only as a citizen or a Christian but also as a priest.

5. 5 Regarding the role of the priest in the Church

Though in the world and at the service of the world, the priest has a specific life style. But the traditional life-style of the priest is derived from the time when both the position of the Church in the world and the status of the priest in the Church were different from today.

6. The open moment — the future

6. 1 Faced with these issues both the 1990 Synod of Bishops and the Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation: *Pastores Dabo Vobis* on the Formation of Priests in the circumstances of the Present Day, of Pope John Paul II²³ adopt a stance which neither absolutizes the past structures, nor reject them completely.

6. 2 The document adopts an integrative stance keeping in mind both the demands of continuity and change. The novelty of the challenges facing priestly formation at the conclusion of the II millennium is outlined²⁴. The nature and mission of the ministerial priesthood are described in keeping with the theological

²³ The Apostolic Exhortation was given in Rome on March 25, 1992.

²⁴ Pope John Paul II, *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Pastores Dabo Vobis* nn. 5-10

insights of Vatican II²⁵. The attitude to formation is holistic (human, spiritual, intellectual etc.)²⁶. The candidates are considered agents of their own formation²⁷. But the traditional setting of the Seminary is retained as a formation community²⁸.

6.3 Is this response adequate to the need? Or will the new wine burst the old skins? Reactions will vary depending on one's point of view.

Be that as it may, it is to be remembered, however, that any response is necessarily a time-bound response and therefore not the final answer.

One of the achievements of post-Conciliar period is the resolute adoption of a dynamic point of view. With respect to the People of God, it means acclimatizing them to life in the context of rapid change. With respect to the institutional structures of the Church, it means building into them the machinery for constant and rapid adaptation. *Aggiornamento* hereafter has to become a way of *being* Christian.

Dominic Veliath

25 See *ibid.*, nn. 19-69

26 See *ibid.*, nn. 42-59

27 See *ibid.*, nn. 65-69

28 See *ibid.*, n. 60

Women's Liberation and the Rebirth of the Myth

1. Introduction

Today we are witnessing all over the world movements towards the liberation of women. Women are among the oppressed, marginalised people who are waking up to their right to live as human beings with dignity and freedom. In most of the cultures of the world they are accorded a subordinate and even subservient place and sometimes have been treated as 'objects' for the advantage of men. Feminists are raising their voices in many quarters, specially in the United States of America, for absolute equality with men in all spheres of life.

While this awakening has opened the eyes of men and women to the many indignities that women have been suffering down the centuries, one cannot deny the fact that it has also brought in its wake many other problems related to a permissive society. Some such problems are premarital and extramarital sex, unwed mothers, abortions, infanticide, divorces and broken families. As a result we are seeing a whole generation of boys and girls growing up without proper parental love and affection, with all sorts of personality disorders, turning into drug addicts, anti-socials and criminals, foreboding disintegration from within of a great nation.

A lasting solution to this problem can be found only if we look at it in a wider context. Women's liberation is not an isolated problem in today's world. It is closely linked with other global problems like those of ecology, racism, violence, poverty of the masses and nuclear proliferation. All these problems have their roots in the loss of 'primitive innocence' where human beings had experienced their unity with nature and with the Spirit (powers) behind natural phenomena. This original intuitive

experience is expressed in every religion, whether primitive or advanced, through myths. But with the dominance of science and reason myth gradually lost its power and 'died'. And this is our problem. In the words of a present day mystic with an indepth experience of World Religions:

"Man cannot live without myth; reason cannot live without the imagination. It creates a desert, without and within. It becomes the sword of destruction, bringing death wherever it goes, dividing man from nature, the individual from society, woman from man, and man and woman from God. This is what the triumph of reason has done, and now we have to go back and recover the myth, return to the source, rediscover our roots, restore the wholeness to man and creation. The myth has to be reborn." (Bede Griffiths, *The Marriage of East and West* (London, 1982) p.171)

In this essay we shall first look at the place that Jesus gives to women, according to St. John's Gospel and then see how women have been treated in the Christian tradition. Then we shall have a brief glance at the place of women in Indian religions and society and finally reflect on the importance of the rebirth and rediscovery of the myth for the survival of humankind.

2. Women in St. John's Gospel

In St. John's Gospel the words and actions of Jesus show that he is not inhibited by the discriminations that the Jewish society was practising against women. He talks to women freely and loves their company. He asks for a drink from a Samaritan woman and engages in a long conversation with her. The disciples of Jesus are astonished at the behaviour of their Master but they do not question him. The Samaritan woman is one of the first to acknowledge Jesus as a prophet. She becomes an apostle to bring the good news about Jesus as the Christ, to the Samaritan village. Through her testimony many Samaritans come to meet Jesus directly and acknowledge him to be the Saviour of the world (4:42).

The Mother of Jesus is the powerful mediatrix through whose intercession Jesus changes water into wine and saves a marriage party from embarrassment and shame. Jesus performs this 'sign' even though his 'hour' has not yet come. When his 'hour' does arrive Jesus gives his Mother as the Mother of his

believing community represented by the beloved disciple at the foot of the cross (19:26-27).

Jesus is an intimate friend of Martha, Mary and Lazarus. Martha excels in her profession of faith when she confesses Jesus to be "the Christ, the Son of God" (11:27). In this profession of faith she is considered to be equal to Peter in his profession recorded in the synoptic Gospels (Cf. Mt. 16:16).

It is to a woman, Mary Magdalene, that the risen Lord appears for the first time. According to St. Paul the criterion to be an apostle is to have seen the risen Lord. Judged by this standard, Mary Magdalene is entitled to be called an apostle. In fact she is traditionally called the apostle of the apostles (*apostola apostolorum*) because she is the one who brings the good news of the resurrection of the Lord to the disciples of Jesus (20:17-18).

3. Women in Christian tradition

Though Jesus does not make any discrimination between women and men, the Christian tradition has always given a subordinate position to women and has sometimes even presented a negative image of woman. Thus, for example, Pauline tradition asks women to keep silence in the Church (1 Cor 14:34) and to be subject in everything to their husbands (Eph 5:21). However, Paul himself respects the equality and dignity of women when he says: "there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28).

Many feminists today feel deeply sore and distressed – and rightly so – at the misogyny present in the writings of the Fathers of the Church. Tertullian speaks of woman as "the devil's gateway" and "the first deserter of the divine law". Clement of Alexandria says that woman should be covered with shame when she thinks "of what nature she is". According to Augustine: "in her the good Christian likes what is human, loathes what is feminine". Even the great Theologian Thomas Aquinas sees woman as "defective and misbegotten".

Given this background it is no wonder that women have always been given a subordinate role in the life and ministry of the Church. On the other hand, throughout the history of the Church, we see women rendering selfless services and making heroic sacrifices for the cause of the Gospel. And the Church has gratefully recognised these services by raising numerous women to the honours of the altar.

4. Women in Indian scriptures and tradition

In Indian society women are given great respect. Woman is the queen of the house and she is given honour and regard in the society as to one's own mother or sister. Though the vast majority of the philosophers and leaders of the nation have been men, there have also been women known for their philosophical and poetical acumen and political prowess.

However, the more general picture that emerges in Indian tradition regarding women is negative and prejudicial. Women were not allowed to read the Hindu sacred scriptures, the *Vedas*. One of the celebrated ancient lawbooks, *Manusmṛiti*, argues that women have no right for independence. The well known reasoning in the original sanskrit text is as follows:

“Pitā rakshati kaumāre
Bhartṛ rakshati yauvane
Putro rakshati vārdhake
Na strī svātantryamarhati”

“While a girl she is protected by her father
As a young woman she is looked after by her husband
In her old age she is under the care of her son
Hence the woman does not deserve independence.”

Till the late 19th century, women in India were deprived of formal education. Traditional Hindu families believed that respectable women never go out of her home to get educated. Such training was meant for nautch girls only.

Respect and love for the husband and submission to him are among the great virtues of women. The husband is like a god to her. An extreme expression of this subservience to the husband is seen in the practice of *sati* that is, self-immolation by the widow at the funeral pyre of her husband. She is burnt along with the corpse of her husband. This is considered to be a heroic act and even today, despite government ban, there are thousands of supporters, both among women and men, of this heinous practice.

Child marriage is another expression of subordination of women. If the ‘husband’, say of a seven year old girl, dies, she has to remain a widow all her life. Her head is shaved and she is given an arid, white garment signifying that she is cursed to

remain a widow all through her life. The sight of such a woman is considered inauspicious and she is despised by everyone within her family and without. Female infanticide and abortion of female foetus are among other practices showing the low esteem given to women in Indian society. Even today the birth of a male child is celebrated with great rejoicing while a female child receives a sombre welcome to family and society. Thus from the womb to the tomb women are despised, persecuted and even burnt by a section of Indian society.

In the midst of such chaos and insanity we hear also words of wisdom from the leaders of the nation. Mahatma Gandhi, the 'Father of the Indian Nation', has the following to say about the equality of women:

"To call woman the weaker sex is a libel. It is man's injustice to woman. If by strength is meant brute strength then indeed is woman less brute than man. If by strength is meant moral power, then woman is immeasurably man's superior. Has she not greater intuition, is she not more self-sacrificing, has she not greater power of endurance, has she not greater courage? Without her man could not be. If non-violence is the law of our being, the future is with woman". (*Young India*, April, 10, 1930).

5. The rebirth of the Myth

Primitive man experienced a harmony between himself, nature and God. He had a profound sense of the oneness underlying the universe. This was an intuition communicated to posterity in the form of myths. With the development of the rational mind, in course of time, this intuitive, holistic awareness was lost.

In most religious traditions this intuitive awareness is expressed through the myth of a golden age. The Book of Genesis speaks of Adam and Eve in paradise, living in close harmony with nature and in intimate communion with God. This harmony is lost through original sin which is interpreted as the dominance of the rational over intuitive experience.

In the Gospel of John Jesus uses the language of symbol and myth. To understand his message we need often to go beyond the literal meaning and intuitively grasp the reality to which the language of symbol and myth is leading us.

God is more than Father and Mother

The feminists are rightly angry at the patriarchal, male figure of God in Christianity. In the Holy Trinity both Father and Son are masculine. The Spirit (*pneuma*) which is neuter in Greek, is commonly spoken of as 'He'. In Hebrew, the word used for the spirit (*ruah*) is feminine. In the Syrian Church this feminine gender was preserved so that they could speak of the Holy Spirit as Mother. The feminine aspect of God as immanent in creation, though found in the Book of Wisdom, has almost been lost sight of in Christianity.

The Christian conception of God as Creator and Ruler, separate from the world and essentially transcendent has made the western world lose the sense of the sacred. Since the world of nature is seen as separate from God, man can dominate, exploit and even violate nature. As a result we have the problems of ecology and we are on the verge of destroying the planet on which we are living.

In Indian tradition God is spoken of as both Father and Mother. God is transcendent, but is also immanent in the world. As transcendent, God is beyond our thought and imagination and the term used to designate God is *Brahman* in the neuter gender. The whole universe is considered a manifestation of God. Everything is in God and God is in everything. Therefore everything – the earth, the sky, the plants, the animals and the human beings – is felt to be sacred. The earth is considered a Mother who nourishes us with food and drink. We need to re-discover the sense of the sacred if the human race is to survive.

Complementarity of the sexes

Every human being is both masculine and feminine. In man the masculine aspect, *animus*, is normally dominant, while in the woman it is the feminine aspect, *anima*, that dominates. In every person both the aspects must be recognised and a certain balance or harmony is to be achieved.

This is true also on a global level. In the West today it is the masculine aspect, the rational, active, aggressive power of the mind that is dominant. In the East the feminine aspect, the intuitive, passive, sympathetic power of the mind has dominance. 'When man refuses to recognize the feminine aspect of himself,

he despises or exploits woman and extols reason over intuition, science over art, man over nature, the white races with their dominant reason over the coloured peoples with their intuitive feeling and imagination. This has been the course of western civilization over the past centuries. The future of the world depends on the 'marriage' of these two minds, the conscious and the unconscious, the rational and the intuitive, the active and the passive." (Bede Griffiths, op. cit. pp 165;9)

Transcending sexuality

Sexuality is common to humans and animals. It is part of our inheritance from animals. There is an instinctive urge in human nature to transcend the physical level of sexuality. There are profound differences between man and woman at the physical and psychological levels. Transcending of sexuality cannot be achieved by ignoring these differences or by trying to achieve equality in every sphere of life. "Ultimately sexuality is the energy of love in human nature and this can never be satisfied either at the physical or at the psychological level but always seeks fulfilment in the depth of the spirit, where it encounters the source of love." (Bede Griffiths, op. cit. p 185)

Most people think of human beings as constituted of body and soul, as a psycho-somatic organism. There is another basic concept of human nature in Christianity as found in St. Paul, which is closer to the Indian understanding. We have a body, a physical organism derived from nature and a soul, a psychological organism with its different faculties of thinking, feeling and loving. But beyond both body (*soma*) and soul (*pseuche*), we are spirit (*pneuma* in Greek and *atman* in Sanskrit), the point at which the human spirit is in touch with the divine Spirit. At this point of the spirit all the differences, including that of sex, are transcended and we are in communion with God and with one another. In this experience of oneness all our divisions and antagonisms are transcended and the harmony between God, nature and the human person is restored. This experience cannot be properly expressed; it has to be communicated through the language of the myth. Hence the need of the rebirth and rediscovery of the myth to heal all the wounds of sin and division that afflict the world today.